*Guru Nanak Quincentenary Celebration Series*

# HINDUISM

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

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# FOREWORD

Though man's religious consciousness has been, time and again, enshrined in song and scripture, in art and architecture, from the beginning there has always been a need for exegetical literature. For the saint and the lay man, the literature of prophecy is enough, but the advanced initiate and the rational thinker always seek doctrinal support. Each major religion, therefore, has gathered a huge mass of expository material which helps project its true image. Nevertheless, it continually requires fresh thought and application inasmuch as it has to meet the requirements of the changing imagination. That is indeed how a religion remains a living force. The effort of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University—the first Department of its kind in Indian universities—to bring out up-to-date volumes on the five principal religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism—is accordingly a scholarly step of great value, particularly as it synchronises with the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. The release of the volumes on this occasion, therefore, is an apt and concrete tribute to the catholicity of the Founder's mind.

The primary aim of these publications is to give the reader an idea of the fundamentals of the religions in question. Thus, no comprehensive analysis or exposition has been attempted, though, I trust, the scholarship which has been commissioned, has made a good job of it. These skeletal studies are intended, in particular, to bring the younger people in our colleges and universities into contact with the various streams of religious experience, thought and practice. Religion, though frequently abused by the pundit and the padre, remains man's most cherished heritage and hope. To open a window on to a long and beautiful vista is thus to invite the youth to unending pastures of pleasure. Literature of this kind has its own distinctive flavour and appeal. Once one has felt what Guru Nanak calls, "the touch of His Love," nothing else will quite satisfy.

KIRPAL SINGH NARANG
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August 5, 1969

# INTRODUCTION

To a student of religion, the most fascinating and perhaps equally bewildering thing about the Hindu tradition is its enormous variety. In its long history extending over three thousand years it has developed innumerable religious sects and philosophical schools. One finds in its fold theological doctrines of different shades, religious practices of different types and numerous cults and creeds. The Hindu tradition has never prescribed a uniform way of life to be followed by all. The richness and variety within the tradition point to its inherent dynamism; it has inspired many to strike new paths in the spiritual realm.

The two characteristic Hindu doctrines, the doctrine of spiritual competence (*adhikāra*) and the doctrine of chosen deity (*Iṣta Devata*) account partly for this phenomenon. The doctrine of spiritual competence requires that a religious discipline prescribed for a man should be suitable to the level of his spiritual evolution. Different spiritual disciplines, therefore, are in order to serve the diverse needs and aspirations. The doctrine of 'chosen deity' implies that out of the numerous forms of the Supreme Being recorded in the scriptures, the worshipper is to be recommended that form which satisfies his spiritual longing and which normally becomes the object of his love and adoration. The psychological dispositions of the aspirant and his natural faculties are taken into consideration for the achievement of an integrated and harmonious way of life.

However, diversity is not the final note of Hinduism; there are strands of unity amidst variety. This unity can be found in some common values and goals of life as well as in certain philosophical doctrines. The doctrines of *karma*, *samsāra*, *mokṣa*, etc. are common to all Hindu philosophical and religious thinking. The doctrine of *karma* recognizes that one's present life is determined by one's previous life and that men are in different stages of their spiritual journey according to their actions. The doctrine of *samsāra* maintains that the cycle of birth and death continues until one attains *mokṣa* or liberation.

An attempt is made in this book by well-known Hindu scholars to bring into focus certain basic themes, affirmations and practices. Their accounts are intended to be introductory and not exhaustive.

Dr Sundararajan's Historical Survey provides information regarding the Hindu scriptures and the leading personalities in the Hindu religious and philosophical schools. It also gives details regarding the different historical periods in the development of the Hindu religious tradition.

Dr T.M.P. Mahadevan's article on Hindu Metaphysics is a brief account of the philosophical contents of the *Vedas*, *Upanisads* and the schools of Indian thought (*Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāmkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mīmāmsā*, *Advaita*, *Visistādvaita*, *Dvaita*, and the different schools of Saivism—*Śaiva Siddhanta*, *Vīra Saivism* and *Kāshmira Śaivism*. Dr Mahadevan points out that though there is a rich variety of religious and philosophical thought - theistic and absolutistic, realistic and idealistic, pluralistic and monistic—there is a certain unity of purpose permeating through multiplicity.

In his article on Hindu Ethics, Dr Sundararajan shows that the Hindu morality has been from the very beginning committed to vindicating two types of moral duties: (i) Conduct that arises from one's station and duties; (ii) conduct that flows from the very moral nature of man. He points out that social duties in the sense of caste duties have often predominated at the cost of categorical moral duties. And yet he draws our attention to the fact that there have been periodical protests against such domination.

Professor Raghavachar in the third chapter entitled Hindu Mysticism stresses the genuineness of *mystical* experience and deprecates the attempts to explain it away in terms of some

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other dimension of human experience. He identifies three types of mysticism: (i) The soul mysticism of the *Yoga Sutras*, (ii) the Identity mysticism of the *Advaita Vedant*, (iii) the theistic mysticism of the *Bhakti* schools. However, according to the author, these types find their happy synthesis in the 'surrender myticism' of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The article of Dr Devasenapathi deals with the encounter of Hinduism with other religions and especially with Christianity. The author is firmly rooted in the Hindu tradition but appreciates the difficulties that men of other faiths may experience in understanding some of the Hindu concepts and doctrines. He also shows how a Hindu can sympathetically understand and appreciate the significance of certain doctrines and concepts of other religious traditions. While stressing the need for a sympathetic understanding of other faiths, he also warns against any attempt to undermine the differences. He believes that the uniqueness of a religious tradiation is precious and, therefore, is to be preserved. He stresses that the recognition of the validity of the different approaches to Reality should not stand in the way of accepting one of them for one's own spiritual benefit and fulfilment.

In his article on 'Modern Movements in Hinduism', Dr Seshagiri Rao discusses the different reform movements from the time of Raja Rammohan Roy. He carefully explicates the significance of Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna and the Gandhian Movements and the impetus they have given to Hinduism in dealing with modern challenges and conditions.

One is surprised to note that a modern Hindu is provided no opportunities at all to study the contents of his own religious heritage. The lack of a centralized religious organization in Hinduism may partly be responsible for this state of affairs. The situation looks ironical when we see an educated youngman, who is conversant with all the developments of philosophical and secular thought, lacks a basic knowledge of his own religion. Our youngmen are not exposed to the meaning and values of their own respective traditions. It is rather unfortunate because it gives an unintended edge to certain ideologies. We feel that in the changed social, economic and industrial set-up of our country, a knowledge of the living religions is most essential to imbibe and inculcate moral and spiritual values. The present volume, along with its companion volumes, published on the occasion of the birth quincentenary of Guru Nanak is a humble effort in this direction. We trust that it will satisfy, at least to some extent, the intellectual and spiritual needs of our young men and women.

I take this opportunity to record my profound appreciation and thanks to my esteemed friend Dr K.R. Sundararajan without whose assistance this volume could not have been published in time. My special thanks are due to the contributors to this Volume for their ready co-operation at every stage.

K. L. Seshagiri Rao

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## I

# HISTORICAL SURVEY

### DR K.R. SUNDARARAJAN

In broad outline the history of Hinduism can be divided into five periods : the Vedic period from 1500 B.C. to 600 B.C.[1] ; the Epic period from 600 B.C. to A.D. 200 ; the *Sūtra* period and the systematic development of the Hindu systems of philosophy beginning from the early Christian era ; the Scholastic period from A.D. 1200 to the eighteenth century and the Modern period beginning from the nineteenth century. The Vedic period represents the time when the Aryans after coming down to India settled in their new homeland and gradually expanded and developed their culture and civilization. The literature of the period shows three successive stages in which are recorded the *mantras* (*samhitās*), the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṅyakas* together with the *Upaniṣads. The Samhitās* comprise the four *Vedas,* namely *Ṛg, Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva.*

The *Ṛg Veda* is divided into ten books (*mandala*) having 1028 hymns (including the 11 supplementary ones) consisting of 10,552 stanzas. The *Yajur Veda* is divided into 40 chapters, with 1975 stanzas and prose units. The *sāma Veda* consisting of 1875 stanzas is divided into two sections. The *Atharva Veda* is divided into 20 books having 730 hymns (5987 stanzas and prose units). Of these, the *Ṛg Veda* is probably the earliest. In the *Yajur Veda,* which is the collection of sacrificial formulae, one comes across many *Ṛg* vedic verses. In the *Sāma Veda,* which is a collection of hymns to be chanted, practically all the verses are taken from the *Ṛg Veda* (excepting 75 verses) and these hymns are set to certain tunes. The *Atharva Veda,* which is a collection of hymns and magical formulae, in the opinion of

Professor Macdonald, is not only different from *Ṛg Veda*, but also represents a much more primitive stage of thought. "While *Ṛg Veda* deals exclusively with higher types of deities and with refined sacradotal class, the *Atharva Veda* is in the main a book of spells and incantations appealing to the demon world and teems with notions about witchcraft current among the lower groups of population and derived from an immemorial antiquity."[2]

The *Brāhmaṇas* are the theological treatises which are written in prose in order to explain the sacred significance of the different rituals. According to Professor Macdonald, "they represent the intellectual activity of an age where everything is centralized on sacrifice."[3] "Free speculative thinking was subordinated to the service of sacrifice", says Professor Dasgupta, "and the result was the production of most fanciful sacramental and symbolic system..."[4] The *Āraṅyakas* or the forest treatises represent a shift from the actual performance of sacrifices to the meditation on certain symbols. Professor Dasgupta suggests that since no elaborate rituals could be performed in the forest due to the lack of necessary materials, the *Āraṅyakas* composed by those men who had retired to forest, laid more stress on meditation than on the actual performance of rituals ; this meditation was considered superior to actual performance.[5] In this respect, it should be said that the *Āraṅyakas* have paved the way for *Upaniṣads* by developing the germs of philosophical speculation contained in the *Saṁhitās* and formed a bridge between the ritualism of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the philosophical endeavours of the *Upaniṣads*.

The *Upaniṣads*[6] are the secret teachings which form part of the *Āraṅyakas* and contain the fundamental themes of Indian philosophy. They are also called *Vedānta*, since they come at the end of the *Vedas*. There are over 200 *Upaniṣads*, although the *Muktika upanishad* speaks of only 108 *Upaniṣads*. Some of them perhaps belong to a later period which were subsequently incorporated into the fold of the *Upaniṣads*.[7] The principal *Upaniṣads* are : *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittrīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhdāraṇyaka*, *Svetāśvatara*, *Kausitaki*, *Mahānārāyaṇa* and *Maitreyī*.

The *Vedas*, including the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṅyakas* and the

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*Upaniṣads*, are called *Śruti* or revelation. In contrast to *Sruti*, *Smṛti* is recollection. They are the works of human origin and derive their authority from *Sruti*. The *Smṛti* period could be very broadly said to extend from 600 B.C. to A.D. 1200, since some of the *Purāṇas* (which were also accepted as *Smṛti*) came to be composed as late as the thirteenth century. In the *Smṛti* period we find the development of *Vedangas, Purāṇas, Epics, Sūtras,* the devotional sects like Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śāktism and the systems of Hindu philosophy.

The Vedangas comprise *kalpa* (ceremonials),[8] *sikṣa* (phonetic), *chandas* (prosody), *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymology) and *jyotiṣa* (astrology). Of these, the *Kalpa Sūtra* consists of three kinds of texts : *Srautra Sūtra* dealing with sacrificial rites ; *Gṛhya Sūtras* dealing with domestic ceremonies, and *Dharma Sūtras* dealing with social behaviour and individual duties. Being *Vedangas*, there are different *Kalpa Sūtras* as appendages to the different *Vedas*. However, only in *Yajur Veda* all the three kinds of text are present. The *Kalpa Sūtras* belonging to other *Vedas* are deficient in one or other type of *Sūtras*. No *Dharma Sūtra* belonging to the *Atharva Veda* is available at present, though a few *Dharma Sūtras* belonging to this fold have been mentioned in *the Mahā Bhāṣya* of *Patañjali*. *Vāśistha Dharma Sūtra* is said to belong to the *Ṛg Veda* and the *Gautama Dharma Sūtra* is believed to be connected with the *Sāma Veda*. The other known *Dharma Sūtras* such as *Viṣṇu, Yājñavalkya, Baudhāyana* and *Āpastamba* belong to the *Yajur Veda*. The *Manu Smṛti* appeared in a codified form much later ; however, the sayings of *Manu* were well known even at the time of the *Dharma sūtras*[9]. While the *Manu Smṛti* refers to the older *Dharma Sūtras* such as those of *Atri*, *Vāsistha*, *Gautama* and *Śaunaka*, it is itself referred to by the *Yājñavalkya*, *Viṣṇu* and *Bṛhaspati*.

The development of epics such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* belong to the early *Smṛti* period (600 B.C. to A.D. 200). "In the epics the ancient stories and legends of the people were so extended and interspersed with didactic matter that they became the *Veda* for the multitude. Thus the teaching of the *Upaniṣads* was brought home to the common people in a concrete form which they could understand, and the knowledge which hitherto has been the exclusive possession of a few has been made available to all."[10] The Epics contain the genealogy of kings—the stories which are derived from different sources and instructions. It is possible that the 'germ' of the epic was present in some form or other before they were composed systematically. There are certain allusions to the epic characters in the earlier works. The *Taittrīya Āraṅayaka* mentions both Vyāsa and Visampavana, but not as authors. Pānini mentions the word *Mahābhārata* but not in the sense of the epic, but as an adjective denoting something great about the *Bhāratas*. He, however, mentions Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Yuddhishtira, but the first two as gods. It is also to be noted that the Pandus whose feud with *Kurus* forms the subject matter of the *Mahābhārata* have not been mentioned in later works, *e.g.* the *Brāhmaṇas*.

Regarding the Age of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the scholars generally agree that it is a much earlier work than the *Mahābhārata* and assign to it the third century B.C. However, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as it exists now, chapters one and eight are considered to be later interpolations. In both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, different recensions, depending on the region, exist and each of these recensions differs considerably from one another. Again like *Mahābhārata*, it is possible that the germ of the epic story was popular and known even before it was actually composed.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* forms a part of the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata*. The scene is the battlefield where the forces of the Kurus and the Pāndus face each other. Arjuna going round the battlefield in the chariot driven by Kṛṣṇa finds his own kith and kin on the enemy side and drops the bow, declaring that he would rather prefer to stay in the forest than to fight and kill them. At this critical moment, Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to fight and while persuading him to perform his duty, he explains the true nature of the self, the perishable nature of the body, the state of *samsāra* (embodiment) and the means for liberation (*mokṣa sādhana*). As to the means for release, he stresses the path of unattached action. The duties, he points out, should be performed without attachment to the fruits of action ; unattached action is superior to the total renunciation of all actions. Therefore he urges that as a *Kṣatriya*, Arjuna should perform his duty, and fight the righteous war.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* which contains 18 chapters comprising 720 stanzas, has remained a source of inspiration for the development of many Hindu schools of philosophy and, to a large extent, for the modern movements in Hinduism. Some of the scholars have considered the setting of the *Gītā* to be allegorical and some of them have found in it the basis for a sound action-bound philosophy of life. Considered as one of the *prasthāna traya*, the *Gītā* has been a basic source for the Vedāntic schools which even today remain the most influential in the Hindu society.

To the *smṛti* period belongs the composition of the *Purāṇas*.[11] The earliest date that could be given to the composition is the fourth century of the Christian era. However, some of the *Purāṇas* came to be composed as late as the fourteenth century. The *Purāṇas*, like the epics, deal with creation, dissolution and re-creation, divine genealogies, ages of Manus and the genealogy of kings. These are called the *Pañcalakṣaṇas* or five characteristics of a *Purāṇa*. Traditionally, eighteen important *Purāṇas* are enumerated (*Maha Purāṇas*). Some *Purāṇas* carry the stamp of sectarianism and they are classified as belonging to three types on the basis of their orientations to Viṣṇu, Śiva or Brahma. Accordingly, these are classified as *Vaiṣṇava purāṇa*, *Śaiva* and *Śakta purāṇas*.

The *smṛti* period is also characterized by the development of the devotional sects of Vaiṣṇavism and Śavism. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva are minor deities in the early Vedic literature but become prominent later on. These devotional sects show considerable non-Aryan religious influence. Vaiṣṇavism has included in its fold the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva; similarly it is possible to argue that the design of a *yogi* found on a seal unearthed in Harappa, represents the prototype of Śiva. Scholars conjecture that the worship of *liñga* in Śaivism is probably Dravidian in its origin. However, the Vedic basis of these religious sects, is clear. Śiva and Viṣṇu become prominent deities after the Vedic period and their conceptions have become richer through identification with other deities in the Vedic pantheon. For instance, Nārāyana has been identified with Viṣṇu and Rudra with Śiva.

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Both Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism rose to prominence and reached a sublime level of spirituality in the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era. The *Ālvārs* in the *Vaiṣṇava* fold and *Nāyanmārs* in the *Śaiva* fold enriched their respective traditions by their mystical and devotional hymns.

The ten *Ālvārs* are the *Vaiṣṇava* saints who lived in South India.[12] The mystical utterances of the *Ālvārs* have shown indebtedness to Vedic scriptures ; however, they are steeped in mythological mysticism of the *Purāṇas*. The *Ālvārs* were also conversant with the *Āgamas*[13] which provided for the concrete worship of icons. The importance of the lives and teachings of the *Ālvārs* lie in the fact that they constituted the source of inspiration for the development of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* by Rāmānuja and the subsequent development of this school under post-Rāmānuja thinkers, especially Vedānta Deśika. The *Nālāyiradivya Prabhandam*, which is a collection of the utterances of these *Ālvārs*, is regarded in the Tamil country as very sacred and equal to the *Vedas* in authority. Verses from it are recited during the performance of sacred ceremonies even today.

The most remarkable work in Śaivism is the devotional hymns of the sixty-three *Nāyanmārs*. The Tamil hymns of the three great *Nāyanmārs*, Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar form the *Thevaram*, the first of the twelve canonical books called *Tirumarai* (Holy Scripture). The eighth *Tirumarai* is the *Tiruvācagam* of one of the *Nāyanmārs*, Manicavācagar. These works of the *Nāyanmārs* are called *Drāvida Śruti*, and are regarded as most sacred by the Śaivites.

The *Śaiva Siddhānta* which is a systematic theological exposition of Tamil Śaivism was developed in the first half of the thirteenth century. The *Sivajñāna Bodham*, a Tamil work written by Meykandār, is the first attempt at a systematic account of the tenets of *Śaivism*. Next comes the *Sivajñāna Siddhiyār* which is an equally important Saivite treatise. This has been followed by eight complementary works of Umapathi Sivācārya. Whereas the Tamil Śaivism was more theistic in outlook, the *Kashmira Śaivism* which was developed in the ninth century was monistic in character. The basic works of this school of *Śaivism* are : (a) the *Āgama Śāstras*, attributed to

Väsugupta, contain 77 *Śivasūtras* (which teach the means of deliverance) and the commentaries; (2) the *Spanda Sāstra*, attributed to Kallata, forms a sort of commentary on *Śiva Sūtras*; and (3) the *Pratyabhijñāna Sāstra* composed by Somananda.

The Indian systems of philosophy began to develop in the early centuries of the Christian era. Systematic treatises of the various schools were presented in an orderly and logical fashion in the form of aphorisms called *Sūtras*. These were the devices through which the initiated (disciples) were enabled to retain the central doctrines and understand their meaning. The six systems that were presented in the *Sūtra* form were: *Nyāya* (*Nyāya Sūtras*), *Vaiśeśika* (*Vaiśeśika Sūtras*) *Sāmkhya* (*Sāmkhya Sūtras*), *Yoga* (*Yoga Sūtras*), *Mīmāmsā* (*Mīmāmsā Sūtras*) and *Vedānta* (*Vedānta Sūtras*). From these *Sūtras* gradully arose fullfledged schools of philosophy through extensive commentaries and sub-commentaries. In course of time, these six systems which were distinct and separate came to be coupled into pairs. Accordingly, *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeśika*, *Sāmkhya* and *Yoga*, *Mīmāmsā* and *Vedānta* were paired together respectively. It is important to note that in the case of *Mīmāmsā* and *Vedānta*, the pairing is not as close as in the case of other systems. *Nyāya* supplies the logical system to *Vaiśeśika* and, in its turn, accepts the metaphysical structure of the latter. *Sāmkhya* provides the metaphysical principles to *Yoga* and accepts the yogic eightfold path as a practical means of obtaining liberation. Whereas the Vedāntins accept some of the canons of interpretation supplied by the *Mīmāmsā*, yet the differences between these two schools and their disagreements are more pronounced.

Of the six systems we have mentioned above, the distinctive character of the *Nyāya* school is its critical examination of the object, source and validity of knowledge. The basic text of the *Nyāya* School—the *Nyāya Sūtras* of Gautama—was written in around the third century B. C. There are commentaries on this work written by Vātsayana in the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian era, Udyotkara in the seventh century and Udayana in the tenth century. Besides these, the *Nyāya Kusumāñjali* of Udayana is also an important independent work. It presents logical proofs in support of the existence of God in a systematic fashion for the first time. A new school of *Nyāya*, known as the *Navya Nyāya*, began with Gangesa Upādhyāya of Mithila by about the thirteenth century. In contrast to the *Nyāya* School which has touched epistemological and metaphysical problems, the new school has confined itself exclusively to the problems of epistemology, to the examination of the four *pramāṇas*, *pratyakṣa* (sense-perception), *anumāna* (inference), *upamāna* (analogy) and *śabda* (scriptural testimony). The commentaries on the work of Gangesa Upādhyāya by Ragunath Siromani (A. D. 1500), Mathura Bhattacharya (A. D. 1580) and Gadādara (A. D. 1650) are worth mentioning.

The system of *Vaiśeṣika* takes its name from *viśesa* (particularity) and emphasizes the significance of particulars. The system is mainly a classification of the objects of knowledge (*padārtha*) in contrast to *Nyāya* which is concerned with the analysis of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Kanāda's *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* constitutes the basic work of this school; the important works of this school are *Padārthadharma Samgraha* of Prasastapāda (fourth century), *Nyāya Kandalī* of Śrīdhara (tenth century) and *Upasākara* by Śaṅkara Miśra (fifteenth century).

The *Sāmkhya* system is notable for its theory of evolution and its primary categories are *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. It comprises three *guṇas* (qualities)—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—and these gunas participate in different degrees as *prakṛti* evolves into 24 categories, *mahat*, *buddhi*, *ahaṇkāra*, *manas*, five organs of perception, five organs or instruments of action, five subtle elements and five gross elements. These categories of evolution are normally accepted by the other school of philosophy and are incorporated in to their framework. The *Sāmkhya Sūtra* of Kapila is the basic work of the school. The other important works are the *Sāmkhya Kārika* of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa, *Tattva Kamudhi* of Vācaspati Miśra (tenth century) *Vṛtti* and *Vṛtti Bhāṣya* on the *Sāmkhya Sūtras* by Aniruddha (fifteenth century) and Vijñāna Bhikṣu (sixteenth century) respectively.

The *yoga* school of philosophy developed by Patañjali has the background of *Sāmkhya*. According to the *Sāmkhya* school, the ultimate entities, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are different from each other with totally different characteristics. Whereas *prakṛti* is made of three qualities (*guṇas*) and is active, the *puruṣa* is devoid of them and is by nature still. *Samsāra* results when somehow this basic distinction is forgotten and an identification is sought to be established. This false identification takes place when the modifications of *buddhi* are superimposed on the *puruṣa*. Now the *puruṣa* fails to realize that the transformations of the *buddhi* belong to *prakṛti*. Liberation (*mokṣa*) consists precisely in ending this state of confusion. *Yoga* provides means to achieve the state *discrimination and perfection*. The yogic discipline consists of the eightfold method of abstention, observance, posture, breath control, withdrawal of the senses, fixed attention, contemplation and concentration.

The central problem of the system of the *Pūrva Mīmāmsā* is the investigation of *dharma* or duty, as it is stated in the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are thought to be eternal and not the creation of God. The Vedic injunctions hold out promises of enjoyment in another world and this is in fact, the state of liberation according to the early *Mīmāmsā*. The life is thought to be governed by the principle of *apūrva* (unseen force) which is correlated with an action in a corresponding consequence. If actions are done, as enjoined in the *Vedas*, one enjoys the fruits of heavenly life which is the *summum bonum*. Therefore the stress of *Mīmāmsā* is on action in contrast to *Sāmkhya* which stresses intellectual discrimination. Jaimini's *Mīmāmsā Sūtra* constitutes the basic text and this work. In all probability, it was written in 200 B. C. The important commentary on this *Sūtra* is *Sabara Bhāṣya* (57 B. C.). There are commentaries on this *Sabara Bhāṣya* by Prabhākara, (seventh or eighth century) and Kumārila Bhatta (seventh century). From the commentaries of Prabhākara and Kumārila two different schools of *Mīmāmsā* arose. These schools differ from each other in respect of certain epistemological matters.

While Jaimini's *Pūrva Mīmāmṣā* is closely connected with the *karma Kānda* or portions of the *Veda*s dealing with action (*karma*), Bādarāyaṇa's *Uttara Mīmāmsā* (about 200 B. C.) deals with *Jñāna Kānda* or religious and philosophical portions of the *Vedas* and especially the *Upaniṣads*. The two together exhaust the contents of the *Veda*. The *Bādarāyaṇa Sutras* are also called the *Brahma Sutras* since they deal with the doctrine of *Brahman*. The *Brahma Sutras* contain 555 verses in which they systematize the Upaniṣadic teachings. Owing to the extremely concise form of ideas presented therein, the need arose for elaborate commentaries. The different systems of *Vedanta*, *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvita* and *Dvaita*[14] are the outcome of such commentaries by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva on the *prasthāna traya*, namely the *Upaniṣads* the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Śaṅkara is generally assigned to the eighth century (A. D. 788-820). The revival of monistic philosophy started in Gaudapādā's *Māṇḍūkya Kārika*, a commentary on the *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad*. This teaching of Gaudapāda reached Śaṅkara through Govinda who was his teacher and was a disciple of Gaudapāda. The central teaching of *Advaita* philosophy, as taught by Śaṅkara, is that the Ultimate and Absolute Reality is One though it appears as many. The famous Upaniṣadic statements 'That Art Thou' and that 'plurality does not exist' are interpreted as signifying the non-dual nature of the Ultimate Reality. Śaṅkara wrote commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the three main canonical works for all schools of *Vedānta*. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* gave rise to a host of commentaries and studies. Ānadagiri, the disciple of Śaṅkara wrote a commentary on Śaṅkara's *Brahma Sutra Bhāṣya* called *Nyāya Nirṇaya*. Another important commentary is by Vācaspathi Miśra (tenth century) called the *Bhāmati*. Sureṣvara's *Naiṣkarmya Siddhi* (ninth century) is an independent treatise on Śaṅkara's philosophy. *Advaita* is a living school of philosophy with a wide following.

The non-dual interpretation of Śankara did not, however, give adequate importance to the theistic elements in the Hindu scriptures. The desire to vindicate the theistic elements in Hindu thought, led to the revival of theism. Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017) endeavoured to present a systematic account of Hindu theism and the school of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* took shape. Rāmānuja's doctrines are based on the authority of the epics, the *purāṇas*, the *Pāñcarātras*,[14] and the writings of the *Ālvārs* in addition to *Prasthānatraya*. The distinctive feature of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* is its conception of Reality. While affirming the Ultimate unity of the Absolute it allows differentiation through its modes (*prakāras*) without implying any fundamental difference in the Reality itself. *Viśiṣṭādvaita* accepts the three eternal *tattvas* of matter (*acit*), individual souls (*cit*) and God (*Īśvara*). Matter and self are absolutely dependent on God for their existence, the dependence being similar to that of the body upon the soul. Such being the case, matter and souls constitute the body of God and are supported and controlled by Him for His purpose.

Madhva with whom the system of *Dvaita* is associated belongs to the thirteenth and the early fourteenth centuries (1238-1317). Madhva wrote 37 works in all. They include : (1) ten philosophical monographs, (2) commentaries on ten *Upaniṣads*, (3) commentaries on the *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtra*, (4) a brief commentary on the first three chapters of *Ṛg Veda*, (5) an epitome of the *Mahābhārata* in verse and (b) a brief note on the *Brahma Sutras* known as *Aṇu Vyākyāna*. This work was later commented upon by Jayathīrtha, who was Madhva's commentator par excellence, in his *Tattva Prakāśika*. Another very important name in the fold of *Dvaita* is Vyāsarāya (1478-1539) whose famous works are *Nyāyamṛta*, *Tarkatāndava* and *Tātparya Chandrika*. The *Dvaita* school of *Vedanta* stresses the absolute difference between the individual and God and in this sense on the creatureliness of the individual soul and the need for divine grace in order to be liberated. Madhva believes in a fivefold difference between the eternal entities (*pañcabheda*). These are fundamental differences which cannot be overcome even at the stage of liberation (*mokṣa*). God is different from the world; God is different from the selves; the selves are different from the world; each self is different from another self; and the world is made up of different entities. This uncompromising insistence on the 'total difference or otherness' could perhaps be considered a reaction against the *Advaita* school of thought which, in a sense, could be said to have 'dragged God down to man's level'. Madhva emphatically affirms that the individual is dependent on God (*paratantra*) whereas God is independent (*svatantra*) of the souls and, hence, they can not be identified with or merged into Him.

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The period extending from the thirteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century has been marked by further developments in the different systems of Hindu Philosophy with commentaries and sub-commentaries. The period is also marked by the growth of a number of religious sects in *Saivism*, *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śāktism*. In *Vaiṣṇavism*, the two schools of *Vadagalai* and *Tengalai* came into existence (in South India) based on the differences regarding the questions of human effort and divine grace and the status of the divine female principle *Sri*. Prominent among these two schools were Vedānta Deśika (thirteenth century) and Manavalamāmuni respectively. The *Tengalai* advocated total surrender to God, including one's responsibility of striving for salvation. The idea behind this is explained on the analogy of a cat carrying its kitten (cat-salvation; *markata Nyāya*). The *Vadagalai*, on the other hand, advocated continuous human efforts in addition to divine grace. The analogy used is that of a young monkey holding on to its mother while moving from one place to another (*mārjāla Nyāya*). In the former case, the kitten is carried by the cat and it has to merely remain quiet; in the latter case the young monkey has to hold on to and co-operate with its mother. On the question of the status of the female divine principle, the *Tangalai* holds that *Sri* is a finite self which has been elevated to the rank of the divine consort. On the other hand, the *Vadagalai* maintains that *Sri* is infinite and uncreated.

The other religious movements of this period are centered on the worship of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, the worship of Śiva and that of Śakti (power or energy of divine action, personalized as the consort of Śiva). Two incarnations of Viṣṇu, namely Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa come into prominence. The epics and the *Purāṇas* provide fertile soil for the development of many religious sects. *Kṛṣṇa-Rādha* worship characterized the Rāmānanda sect which, in its turn, gave rise to many sub-sects such as *Kabir panthis*, *Mulak dāśis*, *Raidāśis*, *Senapanthis*, etc. Tulasidās who wrote a Hindi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (in 1574) also belongs to the Rāmānanda fold. Among the saints who worshipped Kṛṣṇa, Jñaneswara, Nāmdev and Tukaram deserve mention.

The sect of *Vallabhācāris* also preached and practicised the worship of Kṛṣṇa; and the form of devotion advocated by them was that of a lover to the beloved. Caitanya practicised *Rādha bhāva*, a form of devotion patterned on the love of Rādha for Kṛṣṇa. On the other hand, those of *Sahajīya* sect like Jayadeva (who composed the Gīta Govinda), Candideva and Vidyāpathi practised *Sakhi bhāva*. Here, the form of devotion is analogous to the love of a companion for her friend whom she wants to see united with her beloved.

In contrast to the Vaiṣṇavite sects, there were Śaivite sects which practised asceticism and stressed the need to lead a mendicant's life in the quest of spiritual realization. The important Śaivite sects were : *Dandis*, *Yogis*, *Langāyats*, *Paramahamsas*, *Aghoris*, *Sannyāsis*, and *Nāgas*. Besides these, there were *Śākta* groups comprising *Dakshinas*, *Vāmācāris*, *Kāñchlians* and *Karāris*.

All these sects, in general, have disregarded the caste distinctions and included in their folds men belonging to different castes and creeds. As a community of the devotees of the Lord, they saw no distinction between one and another. However, it is noteworthy that these principles of love and devotion which set aside all caste distinctions were to a certain extent responsible for the moral laxity into which some of the Vaiṣṇavite and *Śākta* sects degenerated. The imitation of love of Rādha for Kṛṣṇa, of the love of a companion to see her friend united with her lover, led to certain reproachable practices among the followers of *Vaiṣṇava* sects. The stress on ascetism by the Śaivite sects led to the exhibition of yogic powers for self-mortification and a disregard for life which, in its turn, resulted in cruelty and even sacrificial murders. But this dark side of the movements should not blind us to the other ennobling side of the same religious movements; they have produced a number of saints and sages, who were drunk deep with the love of God and till today provide inspiration and solace to many.

Sri Raja Rammohan Roy could be taken as heralding the modern period in Hindu thought. The entry of Western scientific technology and ideology form the background of the modern period. Along with these came the Christian thought with the stress on social service and the upliftment of the downtrodden. Modern technology required a new pattern of social life ; the old distinctions based on caste proved difficult in an industrial set-up which attracted men belonging to different walks of life and to different social strata. The English education exposed the Hindu mind to the Western humanistic ideology of the times. In the circumstances, Christianity wielded considerable influence on the mind of the intelligentsia.

Under these impacts, the Hindu Society experienced a severe jolt. The intelligentsia began to explore new vistas far from their traditional moorings. Gradually, these new ideas influenced their intellectual outlook; they looked into Hinduism from a new perspective which led to a revaluation of Hindu ideals. Deeply attracted by the personality of Christ and the values he practicised, many Hindus tried to discover similar values in their own tradition.

The Hindu society needed change from increasing externalities with regard to its religious practices and many religious leaders arose to direct the Hindu mind from the externalities to the inner spiritual core. Many were also stimulated to reassess and affirm basic values in Hinduism as a defence against the attacks of some of the over-enthusiastic Christian missionaries against Hindu philosophico-religious customs and social forms which it had adopted through the ages.

The *Brahma Samāj* movement initiated by Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1835), developed by Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) was concerned with the removal of certain evils which had crept into the Hindu social structure. It also attempted to foster religious harmony. The *Dev Dharma* movement by Agnihotri (1850-1929), which branched off from the parent organization, preached a doctrine of rationalistic and ethical humanism.

The *Ārya Samaj* movement by Swami Dayanand Sarasvati (1824-1883) reacted against the Christian missionary activities and upheld the relevance of the basic Hindu values in the modern context. Anne Besant (1847-1930) who initiated the Theosophical Movement made eloquent defence of Hinduism and popularized Hinduism through her energetic activities.

Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886) with his intense devotion, elevating conversations and homely parables was a source of inspiration to many; he infused in his followers a spirit of renunciation and service to humanity. His disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) carried the message of his Master far and wide and stressed that *Vedānta*, the quintessence of the Hindu faith, contained a universal message, which he claimed, was an antidote against Western materialism. In this sense, he initiated the 'counterattack from the East' which consisted in showing the relevance of Hindu thought not only to the modern Indian society but to the world community as a whole. This work initiated by Swami Vivekananda is being ably continued by scholars like Dr Radhakrishnan at present. The integral *Yoga* of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), the spiritual sublimity in the life and teachings of Ramana Maharisi (1879-1955), the nature-mysticism of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and the infusion of religious dedication and ideals into the fold of politics by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), have carried the message of Hinduism far and wide and have exemplified the spiritual treasures contained in this ancient religion.

Hinduism today is full of life and dynamism. It contains in its fold many religious groups, able academicians, different Vedāntic scholars, a variety of *yogis*, free-lance spiritual adventurists and, of course, the religious leaders of the orthodox institutions. There is a great religious awareness among the masses. There is also a desire among the intelligentsia to understand their heritage better and imbibe them. The religious discourses have become increasingly popular and inter-religious dialogues frequent. The enormous upsurge and enthusiasm that we see in the Hindu community today undoubtedly convinces us that this great heritage which has remained a source of inspiration and guidance in the past will be the precious possession of every Hindu and will continue to inspire and guide his actions for ever.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Many scholars accept the Vedic age as 2500 B.C. Some inscriptions of about 1400 B.C. discovered at Bogaz Koi in Asia Minor revealed some familiarity with the Vedic gods. Some of the

princes of Kassite who ruled Babylonia between 1746-1180 B.C. also bear Sanskrit names like *shuryas (sūrya)*, Marytas (Marutas). If the age of Buddhism is fixed as 600 B.C. Dr Radhakamal Mukherjee says, then adequate time should have to be given for the growth of Brahmanical literature and as "a modest computation, we should come to 2500 B.C. as the time of the *Ṛg Veda*". However the Harappan evidence gives a strong case for fixing the age as 1500 B.C.

2. Professor Macdonald: *Religion and the Philosophy of the Veda*, p. 31

3. Ibid. page 31

4. Professor Dasgupta : *History of Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, p. 13

5. Ibid.

6. The word *Upaniṣad* is desired from the roots *upa* 'near', *ni* 'down' and *sad* 'to sit' i.e., sitting down near. Groups of pupil sit near the teacher to learn from him the secret doctrine. Śaṅkara derives the word *Upaniṣad* as a substantive from the root '*sad*' to reach or destroy, with the *upa* and *ni* as prefixes. By this derivation, *Upaniśad* means *brahma* Knowledge, by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed.

7. The *Upaniṣads* form a literature which has been growing with the result that many of the *Upaniṣads* belong to the *Purāṇa* and *Tantra* rather than to the *Veda*. At least the following *Upaniṣads* can be said to have belonged to the seventh and eighth centuries: *Aitrya, Kausitaki, Chāndogya, Kena, Katho, Praśna, Taittrīya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Īśa*.

8. *Kalpa Sutras* unlike *Brāhmaṇas*, simply record the rituals and traditions current in the respective Vedic schools and do not concern themselves with their explanation or rationals.

9. Buhler supposes a *Manava Dharma Sūtra* before *Manu Dharma Śāstra* (*Manu Smṛiti*). For an elaborate discussion, see *The Laws of Manu* (S.B.E. series, Vol. xxv), Introduction.

10. D.S. Sarma, *Religion of the Hindus*, Ed. by Kenneth Morgan, p. 33

11. The 18 *purāṇas* are : *Brahma. Padma, Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Bhāgavata, Nāradiya, Mārkandeya, Agni, Bhaviṣya. Vaivarta, Varāha. Liñga, Skanda, Vāmana, Kūrma, Matsya, Garuda* and *Brahmānanda.* Apart from these, *Maha Purāṇas* there are also *Upa-Purāṇas*, which are comparatively late and highly sectarian.

12. Traditionally, they are assigned to 4000 B.C. However, the recent researches have establishsd the date as between the seventh and the ninth centuries of the Christian era.

13. There are *Vaiṣṇava* and *Śaiva āgamas* which establish the supremacy of *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*, respectively. The *Pāñcarātra*, which is the *Vaiṣṇava āgama*, is Vedic in its origin and there are many

*Upaniṣads* in its fold. The important works of *Pāñcarātra* are : *Sātvata Saṁhitā*, *Jayākheya Saṁhitā*, *Viṣṇu Saṁhitā*, *Ahirbhudhya Saṁhitā*, etc. Though these works deal with philosophical doctrines, they mainly confine themselves to giving instruction regarding the construction of temples and images, description of various rituals associated with image-worship and the daily religious rituals.

14. Apart from these schools of *Vedānta*, the school of *Bhedābheda* is also worth mentioning. In contrast to other schools of *Vedānta*, this school maintains that *Brahman*, the Absolute, has transformed itself into the world of matter and souls. The relation between the world of matter and souls on the one hand and *Brahman* on the other is one of identity-in-difference. This is analogous to the relation that exists between the waves and the sea. The waves are different from the sea in one sense, but they are identical with the sea in another sense. "So all that is one is also many, and the one is neither absolute identity nor absolute difference." The chief exponents of this school of *Vedānta* are Bhāskara (eighth century) and Nimbārka (fourteenth century).

# II

# METAPHYSICS

DR T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

## I

The term 'Hindu' is not indigenous ; it was coined in the distant past by foreigners who came to India through the north-western passes of the Himalayas. It simply meant the people who inhabited the Indus Valley, and, derivatively, the faith they professed came to be known as Hinduism. The expressions usually employed in the sacred books of India to designate Hinduism are *vaidikadharma* and *sanātana-dharma* which mean, respectively the religion of the *Vedas* and the faith eternal. The *Vedas* constitute the basic authority for the Hindu doctrines, which received additions and alterations in subsequent religious literature that came to be written not only in Sanskrit, but also in the popular language of India. The truths that are enshrined in these doctrines are held to be eternal because they pertain to the order of spiritual reality.

Almost bewildering is the variety of doctrines that go under the name of Hinduism. There is a text of the *Ṛg Veda* which declares that Truth is one, though sages call it variously.[1] So a unique feature of Hinduism is its catholicity and comparative freedom from dogma. Since the human mind is limited or finite, it cannot comprehend the nature of the total reality, and even the revelation that is made to it is interpreted by it from its own standpoint. Hence the great sages of Hinduism have taught that there are as many religions as there are human minds. "My Hinduism is not sectarian," wrote Mahātmā Gāndhi in 1938. The richness and variety of creeds that we have in Hinduism do not, however, mean that there are no basic truths to which every Hindu would subscribe both in belief and in practice.

II

Metaphysics is a systematic and sustained inquiry into the nature of the ultimate Reality. It is an attempt to know the reality as against mere appearance. In its attempt to study the nature of the ultimate Reality, Hinduism relies both on reason and revelation.

Every aspect of human experience is valuable to the extent that it would enable us to gain an insight into the nature of the ultimate truth. Empirical approach is as important a rational inquiry in metaphysics ; whereas the former provides us with the rich and manifold data which become available when a man is awake, dreaming or in a state of deep sleep, the latter examines and analyses them with a view to finding out the truth behind or inherent in them. The method of inquiry into the states of experiencing, waking, dreaming and deep sleep is frequently adopted in the *Upaniṣads* for arriving at the knowledge of the ultimate Reality. The most systematic statement of this method is to be found in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.*

To the Hindu philosopher, experience is the ultimate test of truth. The word 'experience' is not used in the restricted sense in which it has been used by the positivists in the West. It is used in the most comprehensive sense to cover all aspects of experience including sense experience. Since the Reality is trans-empirical, it cannot be known through sense experience in the way in which empirical objects are known. It is known through *intuitive* experience (*anubhūti*) ; it is the experience at the highest level, for it transcends both the rational and the sensory aspects of human experience with which we are normally acquainted.

Since the ultimate Reality is trans-empirical, the Hindu philosophers rely on scripture (*śruti*) for obtaining the knowledge of the real. Discursive reasoning functions at the relational level. It comes into operation only by making a distinction between the 'that' and the 'what', subject and predicate, etc. Since the ultimate Reality is distinctionless, reason is not competent to comprehend it. Further, reason can give us only mediate knowledge which cannot claim indubitable certitude. This is because mediate knowledge depends for its validation on the validity of some other knowledge which is its ground. If this other knowledge is also mediate, it will result in infinite regress without arriving at certitude. So the proper ground of rational knowledge is immediate experience (*aparokṣānubhava*).

The approach of the Hindu philosophers who depend upon the scripture for getting the knowledge of the ultimate Reality should not be considered to be dogmatic and uncritical. If they appeal to the scripture as the ultimate authority in respect of the trans-empirical reality, it is because of the inadequacy of reason to comprehend it. The truth which the scripture speaks about is the direct outcome of the intuitive or mystic experience of the ancient seers. It does not contain anything which is not borne out by their direct and authentic experience.

Though the scripture is authoritative, the knowledge which one derives from it is only mediate (*parokṣa*). The truth conveyed by it is borne out by others' experience, the experience of the seers. Unless this becomes immediate (*aparokṣa*) to the seeker after truth, he has not reached the goal. The knowledge which is revealed by the scripture must become a matter of experience ; only then revelation would have fulfilled its mission. For one who has realized the integral experience, there is no need to depend on any external authority in the form of a scripture. His wisdom is self-certifying and self-revealed.

## III

According to the *Upaniṣads*, Brahman or Ātman which is the ultimate reality is of the nature of existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*).[2] It is one only and non-dual (*ekameva advitīyam*).[3] The individual soul (*jīva*) in its essential nature is non-different from Brahman. The pluralistic universe is only an illusory appearance of Brahman or Ātman due to *māyā* or *avidyā*.

The two terms Brahman and Ātman are used in apposition and are regarded as synonyms in the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Chān-*

*dogya Upaniṣad*, for example, the central question in philosophy is formulated thus : "What the Ātman ? What is Brahman ?" In some places in the *Upaniṣads* where the inquiry is into the source of the universe, the term 'Ātman' is used, and in certain others where the topic of investigation is the true self of man the term 'Brahman' is used. According to the *Upaniṣads*, the two terms 'Brahman' and 'Ātman' signify the same reality within and without. One and the same reality, Brahman-Ātman, appears as the manifold world and as the plurality of individuals.

The ultimate Reality, according to the *Upaniṣads*, is not the subject as over against the objects ; it is that which underlies both the subject and the object. This truth can be realized whether we make an objective approach to it through the study of the cosmic phenomena, as we find in the dialogue between Bālāki and Ajātasatru in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, or a subjective approach through the study of the triple stream of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, as in the *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad*. The non-dual Brahman-Ātman is that in which the entire universe gets resolved ; it is the underlying substratum of the triple stream of experience.

Right from the beginning of the Hindu metaphysical speculation, there have been two chief currents—one which may be called the theistic and the other absolutistic. All forms of theism recognize a cosmic creator called God, whereas absolutism reduces the plurality of things to one non-dual spiritual reality. Both these points of view may be traced to the *Upaniṣads*.

The non-dual Brahman-Ātman is conceived of in two forms in the *Upaniṣads* : (1) as the all-inclusive ground of the universe and (2) as the reality of which the universe is an appearance. The former is the cosmic view (*saprapañca*) of the Absolute, whereas the latter is the acosmic view (*niṣprapañca*). These two views serve as the bases for the theistic and absolutistic schools of Vedānta. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, there is a beautiful account of the cosmic view of reality as follows : He who consists of mind, whose body is life, whose form is light, whose conception is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, all desires, all odours and all tastes, encompassing the whole world, the speechless and the calm—this soul of mine within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or that of barley or a mustard seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernal of a grain of millet ; this soul of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the mid-region, greater than the heaven, greater than all the worlds."[6] The acosmic view of the Absolute is well brought out in the following text from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. "This is imperishable, O Gārgi, which the wise men adore—not gross, not subtle, not short, not long......without mind, without light, without breath, without mouth, without measure, and without either inside or outside. Not that does anything eat ; nor that does eat anything."[7]

The cosmic and the acosmic views of Brahman lead to two conceptions of the world, one which considers the world to be a real emanation of Brahman and the other which regards it as an appearance of Brahman.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that Brahman is the cause of the origination, sustainment and destruction of the Universe.[8] The opening text of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* says that all this (universe) is enveloped by God, that is, the universe derives its sustenance from God. It is necessary in this connection to emphasize two important features in respect of the creation of the world. First, the *Upaniṣads* trace the origin of the world to a spiritual principle, Brahman-Ātman, and not to a material source. Second, Brahman does not create the universe out of an extraneous matter ; the universe is only a manifestation of an aspect of Brahman. It is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world (*abhinna-nimittopādāna-kāraṇa*).

From the standpoint of acosmism, there is no real creation. The pluralistic universe is not real ; it is only an appearance of Brahman, due to *māyā*. Brahman remains intact without undergoing any change, in the same way as the rope remains intact without undergoing any change or modification even though it appears as a snake. The creation which is taught in the *Upaniṣads* is only for the purpose of introducing the truth of non-difference.

The orthodox schools of philosophy, i.e. the Hindu philosophical systems, are said to be six : *Nyāyɔ, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhyɔ, Yoga, Pūrva-Mīmāmsā* and *Vedānta*. There are subdivisions also in regard to some of the schools. Each of them, according to its metaphysical persuasion, favours either the cosmic or the acosmic view.

IV

The metaphysics of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is both realistic and pluralistic. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika maintains that the external world exists in its own right independently of the mind. While it is true that we know the world outside us through the mind, the world is not dependent upon the mind for its existence; the system is, therefore, realistic. Since it admits a plurality of distinct entities which are eternal, it is also pluralistic. Another distinctive feature of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is its theory of atomism according to which the physical world consists of things each of which is reducible to a number of atoms.

Though the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika originated independently of each other, they are treated as one hyphenated system Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, in so far as the Nyāya accepts the metaphysical scheme of the Vaiśeṣika and the Vaiśeṣika in its turn adopts the Nyāya logic and epistemology.

The analysis of the objects of the world in terms of categories is the most important feature of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. A category (*padārtha*) is what can be known (*jñeya*), validly cognized (*prameya*), and named or denoted (*abhīdheya*). There are six positive categories and one negative category. The six positive categories are : (1) substance (*dravya*), (2) quality (*guṇa*), (3) activity (*karma*) (4) generality (*sāmānya*), (5) particularity (*viśeṣa*), and (6) inherence (*samavāya*). Non-existence (*abhāva*) is the one negative category, which is a later addition to the list.

(1) substance (*dravya*) is the main category as it includes all things, living and non-living. It is defined as the substrate of qualities and activity, and as the inherent cause of a product. There are nine substance : (1) earth (*pṛthvi*) (2) water (*ap*), (3) fire (*tejas*), (4) air (*vāyu*), (5) ether (*ākāśa*),

time (*kāla*), (7) space (*dik*), (8) self (*ātman*), and (9) mind (*manas*). These substances constitute the stuff of the universe, physical as well as spiritual. The first four, viz. earth, water, fire and air, are atomic in their nature, and so are partless and eternal; ether, time, and space are infinite and all-pervading. The physical universe is made up of an infinite number of atoms of four types and the three infinite and all-pervasive entities.

The nature of the self (*ātman*) as understood in this system is very peculiar. The self is omnipresent and eternal. Its attributes are cognition, desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain, merit and demerit. But these attributes are adventitious because they are not always present in the self. According to this system, the self has no attributes, not even consciousness in the state of release. Thus though the self is considered to be a spiritual entity, it is not in the commonly accepted sense of the term. The selves are many. Though each self is omnipresent and eternal, it is limited by the psycho-physical organism with which it is associated during transmigration. Mind which is the last in the list of substances is atomic and eternal. Each self has, its own mind which is only an instrument of knowing and is therefore, inert. It is through the mind that the self experiences and goes through transmigration.

(2) Quality (*guṇa*) is defined as that which has substance for its substratum, has no further qualities, and is not a cause of, nor has any concern with conjunction or disjunction. There are twenty-four qualities, some of them being material and others mental. The qualities are : colour (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), touch (*sparśa*), sound (*śabda*), number (*Saṅkhyā*), size (*parimāṇa*), separateness (*pṛthakatva*), conjunction (*samyoga*), disjunction (*vibhāga*), remoteness (*paratva*), proximity (*aparatva*), cognition (*buddhi*), pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*), desire (*iccha*), aversion (*dveṣa*), effort (*prayarthana*), heaviness (*gurutva*), fluidity (*drayatva*), viscidity (*sneha*), faculty (*samskarā*), merit (*dharma*), and demerit (*adharma*).

(3) Activity (*karma*) is explained in this system as physical motion which may be of five kinds, viz. upward, downward, contraction, expansion and locomotion.

(4) Generality (*sāmānya*) is the generic feature which resides

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in all the members of a class. It is the common characteristic by virtue of possessing which an individual becomes a member of a class, e.g. animality, man-ness, etc. Whereas the individual objects are many, come into being and pass away, the *sāmānya* is one (*eka*), eternal (*nitya*), and resides in the many (*anekānugata*). Like Plato's 'Ideas', it has a reality of its own independent of the particulars. It resides in substances, qualities, and activities. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika explains the relation between *sāmānya* and the individual as one of inherence (*samavāya*).

(5) Particularity (*viśeṣa*) is that characteristic which distinguishes one object from another. It is the differentiation of ultimate things which are otherwise alike. Two atoms of earth, for example, are alike in every respect. But if still they should be two, there must be a distinctive feature in each. In the same way there should be a special trait in each of the selves which marks it off from the rest; and the differentiating feature is its *viśesa*. The *viśeṣas* are many, as the eternal substances (*nitya-dravyas*) are so. They differentiate not only the ultimate substances from one another, but also themselves (*svato vyāvartaka*). The pluralistic character of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system depends on the category of *viśeṣa*, and hence its importance.

(6) Inherence (*samavāya*) is an intimate relation between two inseparables. It is to be distinguished from conjunction (*samyoga*) which is a temporary relation between two substances which can exist separately. The relation which obtains between five kinds of inseparables, viz. (1) substance and quality (2) substance and activity, (3) particular and generality, (4) eternal substance and particularity, and (5) whole and parts, is said to be *samavāya*.

(7) Non-existence (*abhāva*) which is a name for all negative facts is explained as the negation of something somewhere. It is of four kinds : (1) prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*), (2) annihilative non-existence (*pradhvamsābhāva*), (3) reciprocal non-existence (*anyonyābhāva*), and (4) total non-existence (*atyantābhāva*).

The atomic theory of the world and the idea of God, as a wholly transcendent being who creates the world, are two aspects which remain to be discussed in connection with the metaphysics of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. According to the atomic theory of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the physical world is reducible to atoms which are material entities without parts. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika recognizes four kinds of atoms—earth, water, fire and air. The finite thing of the world are each composed of one type of atoms. The atoms give rise to the things by coming together in various ways. The variety we observe in the universe is due to the number of atoms that go into the making of each entity, and also to the qualitative differences between the kinds of atoms. The process of the origination of things is as follows : First, two atoms (say, of earth) come together and constitute a binary compound (*dvyaṇuka*); then , three such binaries produce a triad (*triaṇuka*). Out of the triads, coming together in various groups, the finite things are constituted. The process of destruction follows the reverse order.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes in the existence of God as Supreme Soul (*Paramātman*), as distinguished from the individual souls (*jīvātman*). He is omnipresent, and eternal consciousness is his constant attribute. He is the efficient cause of the universe, and not its material cause. He is the prime mover of the primary atoms which by coming together in different ways constitute the things of the physical world. He is the moral governor of the world. Guided by the past *karma* of the souls, He creates, protects, and destroys the universe, and re-creates it.

## V

The *Sāṅkhya* is a system of realism, dualism, and pluralism. It is realism because it recognizes the reality of a world independent of spirit ; it is dualism because it holds that there are two fundamental realities distinct from each other, viz. matter and spirit; and it is pluralism because it teaches a plurality of spirits. It is, in short, a qualitative dualism and a numerical pluralism. Whereas in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, there are many kinds of matter as well as many souls, in the Sāṅkhya unity is achieved in the realm of matter, though plurality is retained in the sphere of the souls. Like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga are allied systems. The Yoga accepts the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhya.

According to the Sāṅkhya, there are two basic entities constitutive of reality, viz. *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, spirit and matter.

*Puruṣa* is pure consciousness which is changeless aud multiple ; *prakṛti* is the primal matter of creation and is inert and one. Though the two are diametrically opposed to each other, the evolution of the world takes place because of co-operation between the two.

*Prakṛti* is constituted by the three *guṇas*, viz. *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, in their state of equilibrium. When the three constituents of *prakṛti* are of equal force, evolution does not take place ; but when their balance is upset, the process of evolution begins. Since the Sāṅkhya believes in the theory of transformation (*pariṇāmavāda*), it maintains that the universe is but a transformation of primal matter. The universe evolves from *prakṛti* and is finally dissolved therein. The purpose of evolution is to afford enjoyment to *puruṣa* in this world, and eventually to release it from bondage.

*Puruṣa* is of the nature of pure consciousness. The Sāṅkhya postulates a plurality of *puruṣas*. The co-operation of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti* is necessary for the evolution of the world. Just as in the proximity of a magnet the iron-filings begin to move, so in the presence of *puruṣa*, *prakṛti* begins to evolve.

Though the Sāṅkhya is an orthodox system (*āstika-darśana*), there is no place for God in it. The Yoga, however, believes in God. But God in this system is one of the objects for concentration. Devotion to God (*Īśvaro-praṇidhāna*) is one of the virtues which the student of *yoga* must cultivate. And so God does not occupy an important place in the metaphysical scheme of the Yoga system.

## VI

The metaphysics of the Pūrvā-mīmāmsā is realistic and pluralistic. There is the physical universe which is external to, and independent of, the mind of the individual. It is real with all its diverse objects. The external world is constituted by a plurality of material ultimates. The Pūrvā-Mīmāmsā also believes in a plurality of selves.

The Mīmāmsā admits five categories, viz. substance, quality, action, universals, and non-existence. But it does not recognize *samavāya* and *viśeṣa* which have been admitted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in addition to the other five categories. The Mīmāmsā explains the relation between substance and attribute or the universal and the particular as one of identity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*).

The self, according to the *Mīmāmsā*, is eternal and infinite. It is characterized by six qualities, viz. knowledge, desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, and volition. The Mīmāmsā holds the view that knowledge is an activity of the self and that the latter undergoes a change in knowing objects.

Like the Sāṅkhya, the Mīmāmsā argues that there is no need to postulate a God as the author of the Veda. There is no need either to assume a creator of the universe, for, according to the Mīmāmsā, there is neither creation nor dissolution of the universe as a whole. At no time was the world otherwise than what it is now. The world has no beginning ; nor is it going to have an end. It is self-existent.

### VII

It has already been pointed out that both theistic and absolutistic schools of Vedānta trace their origin in the *Upaniṣads*. Each school of Vedānta accepts the *Upaniṣads*, the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as the basic authorities, and claims that it is faithful to them in its interpretation.

The greatest and the best-known system of Vedānta is Advaita. Śaṅkara puts the entire philosophy of Advaita in half a verse where he says : Brahman is real : the world is an illusory appearance ; the individual soul (*jīva*) is Brahman alone, not other. The non-duality of Brahman, the non-reality of the world, and the non-difference of the soul from Brahman—these constitute the teaching of Advaita.

According to Advaita, *Brahman-Ātman* is the ultimate reality. Reality cannot be two ; and it must be of the nature of consciousness. If it is not non-dual, then it will be limited and conditioned and thus cease to be real. Every limitation is a negation. If reality is non-conscious, it cannot be even known; and even to say that reality is non-conscious, there is required a fundamental consciousness. It is to indicate the nature of this basic consciousness that such terms as Ātman and Brahman are employed. The ultimate Reality is called Ātman in order to show that it cannot be denied; for it is the Self of even the one who denies.[9] We know *that* the Self is; but we do not know *what* it is. Our ordinary notions of the Self that it is limited, etc. are wrong. So the *Upaniṣads* tell us that the Self is Brahman (*ātmā ca brahma*), that it is existence, consciousness, and infinite (*satyam jñānam anantam*), and that it is of the nature of bliss (*ānandam brahma*).

Brahman-Ātman cannot be characterized through any of the categories. It is to be known only negatively as "not this, not this" (*neti-neti*). It does not mean on this account that Brahman is blank or nothingness. Every significant negation affirms by denying. It is true that Brahman is without characteristics (*nirguṇa*) and without distinctions (*nirviśeṣa*); but that does not mean that it is characterless. The *Upaniṣads* seek to convey to us the nature of Brahman through such expressions as *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss) and also through such texts as *tat tvam asi* (that thou art).[10]

Brahman-Ātman which is the ultimate reality is unconditioned, without characteristics, without distinctions. But the same reality, when endowed with attributes, is called *Saguṇa Brahman*. Brahman is the same as *nirguṇa* (attributeless) and as *saguṇa* (with attributes). There are not *two* Brahmans. When God is referred to as the lower (*apara*) Brahman, what is meant is not that Brahman has become lower in status as God, but that God is Brahman looked at from the lower level of relative experience. These are two forms (*dvirūpa*) of Brahman and not two Brahmans: Brahman-as-it-is-in-itself, and Brahman-as-it-is-in-relation-to-the-world. The former is the unconditioned Brahman; the latter is Brahman as conditioned by nomenclature, configuration and change. As related to the world, Brahman is the cause or ground of the universe. It is that from which all beings spring into existence, in which they live, and to which they return at the end. It is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. According to Advaita, the causal relation between God and the world must be understood not in terms of *pariṇama* (transformation), but in terms of *vivarta* (illusory appearance). There is no real causation ; the world is but an illusory appearance in Brahman, even as the snake is an illusory appearance in the rope.

The principle that makes for the phenomenal appearance of the world is called *māyā*. *Māyā* has significance only from the relative standpoint, and not from the absolute one. It is the mysterious power of God that veils the true and projects the untrue. The power of veiling is called *āvaraṇa*, and that of projecting *vikṣepa*. If one were to ask : is *māyā* real or not ?, the only answer is : it is neither real nor unreal. Since the world of plurality appears, *māyā* is not unreal ; and since *māyā* disappears at the onset of the knowledge of the non-dual Self, it is not real. It cannot be both real and unreal. So it is indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*). Any inquiry into *māyā* is not to make the concept intelligible, but to enable one to go beyond it. When one has gone beyond, there remains no problem to be solved.

The place of God in Advaita may be understood from the standpoints of both metaphysics and axiology. God is to be regarded as the ground of the universe and as the goal of meditation. In relation to the world, God is the basic Existence ; in relation to the individual soul, He is the Supreme Value.

God is not a cause among causes producing the world ; He is the whole and sole cause. He is, as already pointed out, both the material and the efficient cause of the world. Neither primal nature, nor a set of atoms, nor non-existence, nor the individual souls are equal to the task of the world projection. God alone can serve as the adequate ground.

God is not only the world-ground, but also the moral governor. The law of *karma* which operates in the moral

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realm has God for its guide. *Karma* is the principle of justice that matches deserts with deeds—good for good and evil for evil. And God is the dispenser of justice. This is, however, not the same as saying that God is connected with the law in a merely administrative capacity of a paymaster. He is both the Law giver and Law.

The devotee worships God in various forms and under different names. It is the same God that takes on a variety of forms and names through his power of *māyā*. He assumes the form which the devotee chooses and responds to the name by which he is called. Whenever *dharma* is threatened, God incarnates himself in order to preserve it for the world. Although unborn and without body, he appears to be born as it were, to be embodied as it were. In order to shower his grace on the devotees in the most concrete mode, he makes the images that are made for him alive with divinity. It is true that the highest way of worship is to see God everywhere, as all in all. But for most people, limited and unevolved as they are, this becomes difficult, if not impossible. For their sake, God assumes limited forms and definite names. Starting from the crudest and narrowest modes of worship, the devotee should progress to nobler and broader modes. "The first stage is the image-worship ; the next consists in *japa* and prayer ; still higher is the mental worship ; the highest is of the form : 'I am He'."

While it is true that Advaita seeks to go beyond theism, it is not to be confused with atheism or anti-theism. The supreme Reality is absolutely unconditioned ; it is super-personal. But it appears as if personal in order to serve as the ground of the universe and as the object of adoration for man. It is not that Brahman is degraded into Īśvara ; on the contrary, it is Īśvara that is realized to be Brahman in plenary experience. It is as God that the Absolute becomes the pivot of the universe and as the paradigm of perfection for the soul.

## VIII

The Vedāntins who came after Śaṅkara did not agree with the latter's interpretation of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*.

The controversy centred on the question whether Brahman is *nirguṇa* or *saguṇa*. Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins maintain that Brahman is *saguṇa*.

According to Rāmānuja, though the ultimate Reality is the non-dual spirit, it is not a distinctionless, homogeneous identity. It should rather be conceived on the analogy of an organism involving internal differentiation. Brahman is a substance bearing attributes, some of which are themselves substances. As thus endowed with attributes, it is *viśiṣṭa* (that which is qualified) and *nirviśeṣa-caitanya* (undifferentiated consciousness).

Though Viśistādvaita maintains that there are three ultimate realities (*tattva-traya*), viz. God (*Īśvara*), soul (*cit*), and matter (*acit*), it is not pluralistic in the usual sense of the term. Though the three entities are real and distinct from one another, God alone is the independent reality, the other two being dependent on Him. The relation between God on the one hand, and the world of souls and matter on the other is analogous to that between soul (*śarīrī*) and body (*śarīra*). God is the soul of souls, and of nature. These two are distinct from God, but not separable from Him. It is not an external relation that governs them, but the internal relation of inseparability (*apṛthak-siddhi*). The relation of *apṛthak-siddhi* is the pivot on which the Viśistādvaita philosophy turns. God as qualified (*viśiṣṭa*) by the world of souls and matter is non-dual (*advaita*). The metaphysical standpoint of Viśistādvaita may, therefore, be characterized as "organismal non-dualism."

Brahman or Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is endowed with the eternal attributes of truth, goodness, beauty, and bliss. He is the support (*ādhāra*) of all beings, their controller (*niyantṛ*), the goal (*śeṣin*). Rāmānuja bases his entire philosophical system on the following text of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* : "He who dwells in the world, and is within it, whom the world does not know, whose body is the world, and who controls the world from within, is the self, the inner ruler, immortal." Though God or Brahman is the immanent principle of both the world and the soul, He is not affected by the changes in the world and the soul. God is not only immanent in them, but also transcends them. He is the supreme moral governor and world-

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redeemer. He is all-merciful ; he incarnates himself from time to time in order to recover the lost souls. He appears also in the form of idols (*arcā*) worshipped in sacred places. He is free from all defects and is possessed of all auspicious qualities.

The soul (*jīva*) is of the essence of the spirit. It *is* and *has* knowledge. The soul as knowledge does not change ; but as having knowledge it changes. Knowledge as an attribute is called *dharmabhūta-jñāna* ; it characterizes both the souls and God. As an attribute, it is inseparable from them. It is also a substance (*dravya*) in the sense that it is capable of contraction and expansion, and is the substrate of change. The soul's attributive knowledge expands to its fullest in the state of release ; there is nothing then that the soul cannot know. In the state of bondage, however, the soul's attributive knowledge is more or less contracted.

The *Dvaita* of Madhva is both pluralistic and realistic. That there is a plurality of reals is the basic doctrine of Madhva. "Diverse are all the things of the world, and they possess diverse attributes." It is realistic since the world of objects exists independently of human knowledge. According to Madhva, difference is the very nature of things. While distinguishing them, it distinguishes itself also. There is difference between (1) God and soul, (2) soul and soul (3) God and matter, (4) soul and matter, and (5) one material thing and another. Thus the *Dvaita* of Madhva is a philosophy of distinctions.

God, souls and the world are all equally eternal. But God or Viṣṇu alone is independent. He is the supreme Reality (*Sarvottama*) endowed with the plenitude of all properties (*guṇa-pūrṇa*). "He is the one Supreme Being that is to be known ; he alone is the independent agent." He alone is the efficient cause of the world, and its material cause. Nevertheless, he is the creator, controller, and destroyer of the universe. God manifests himself in various forms (*vyūhas*), incarnates himself (*avatāras*) from time to time, and is present in the sacred images. He is Hari, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, who can be known through the scripture.

The souls are infinite in number. Each soul is different from others, and also from God and the world of matter. Each soul is atomic in size, but pervades its body by virtue of the quality of intelligence. It is an active agent, dependent on God's will. It is eternal and by nature blissful. But the connection with matter brought about by past *karma* makes it suffer pain and undergo transformation. There are three classes of souls : (1) those that are eternally free (*nitya*) like Lakṣmī, (2) those that have attained freedom from *saṃsāra i.e.* have become liberated (*mukta*) ; these are the gods, and the sages, (3) the bound (*baddha*). The third group consists of (i) those who are eligible for release (*mukti-yogya*) and (ii) those who are not so eligible.

The world of nature is not an illusion or a magical show. Nor is it a transformation of Brahman or God. *Prakṛti*, whose first products are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, is the material cause of the world. The effect is both existent and non-existent in its material cause. Before the world was produced it was in *prakṛti* as cause, and not as effect. From *prakṛti* the world is evolved by God who energizes it through *Lakṣmī*. The evolutes of *prakṛti* furnish the souls with the means and material for their working towards their final destiny.

## IX

There is a variety of schools of Saivism whose philosophical standpoints range from pluralism to monism. The most important of the Saivia schools are *Saiva-Siddhānta*, which is the philosophy of Southern Saivism, *Vīra-Saivism*, and *Kāśmira-Saivism.*

The central doctrine of Saiva-Siddhānta is that Śiva is the supreme Reality and that *jīva* is of the same essence as Śīva, but not identical with it. The three categories, viz. God (*pati*) soul (*paśu*), and the bonds (*pāśa*), and the thirty-six principles (*tattvas*) constituting the world are all real. So the Siddhānta is a pluralistic realism.

God who is the highest reality in the Siddhānta system is called *pati*, since he is the only lord of all beings. He is uncaused, omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, pure, and eternally free from bonds. He is also referred to as Hara and Śiva. He is Hara in the sense that he removes the bonds of the soul, as also

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in the sense that in him the world gets resolved. He is the supreme bliss. He may be referred to by any of the three genders corresponding to the threefold form in which the universe appears viz. as "he", "she, and "it".

God, according to the Siddhānta, is *nirguṇa*. The expression does not mean "attributeless" as in *Advaita*; it only means devoid of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* which are *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. He is only the operative cause of the world, and not its material cause, as in some schools of the Vedānta. It is *māyā* which is the material cause of the universe, as clay is of the pot. But mere clay will not transform itself into a pot, since for such transformation the activity of an agent, viz. a potter, is required. In the same way, for creating the world out of *māyā* an operative cause is essential; and that is God. God creates the world, being its operative or efficient cause, through his *śakti* which is the instrumental cause. Śiva has five functions, viz. creation, preservation, destruction, concealment, and the bestowal of grace. He provides bodies and objects of enjoyment for the souls so that the latter may be rid of ignorance and realize their nature. His functions are all designed for weaning the soul from its way of sin.

*Māyā* is postulated as the material cause of the universe on the basis of *sat-kārya-vāda*. The universe which is an effect must have a material cause which is not different from it in nature. The universe is non-intelligent (*acit*); and God who is intelligence (*cit*) cannot be its material cause. So a material cause which is non-intelligent has to be postulated. That is *māyā*. According to the Siddhānta, *māyā* is twofold, pure and impure, *śuddha-māyā* and *aśuddha-māyā*. The former is *māyā* in its primal state. It gives rise to five pure principles through which Śiva functions. *Aśuddha-māyā* is the cause of the material world.

The *Siddhānta* believes in a plurality of souls. Though souls are by nature infinite, all-pervading, and all-knowing, they think that they are finite, limited, and little-knowing due to their bonds, viz. *āṇava*, *karma*, and *māyā* which are called the three impurities (*malas*). *Āṇaya-maya* is a conative impurity. The part it plays is similar to *avidyā*, as understood by *Advaita*

*Vedānta*. It is called *āṇava* because on account of it the infinite soul becomes finite or atomic (*aṇu*), as it were. Because of this limitation, the soul acts in certain ways which are regarded as good or bad. These acts bring, in their consequence, the second bond called *karma*. To experience the consequences and acquire knowledge thereby, the worlds, objects of enjoyment, and instruments of cognition and enjoyment are needed. These are provided by *māyā*, the third *mala*. The three *malas* together constitute the bondage of the soul.

According to Vīra-śaivism which is otherwise called Lingāyata, Para Śiva, the Supreme Reality, though non-dual, is qualified by its power (*śakti*). Hence the Vīra-śaiva philosophy is known as *Sakti-viśiṣṭādvaita*. *Vīra-śaivism* maintains that God and soul are in an inseparable union through the inalienable power called *śakti*. The individual soul is a part, of which God is the whole ; it is the body of which God is the soul.

Para Śiva which is the Supreme Reality in *Vīra-śavism* is technically called *sthala*, which means place, position, or abode. It is the abode of all beings. In it, the universe exists (*sthā*), and to it the universe returns (*la*) at the end. Out of its own will, it becomes divided into *Liṅga* and *aṅga*. Its *śakti* also gets split into *kalā* (part) and *bhakti* (devotion); the former resorts to Śiva, and the latter to the individual soul. *Kalā* is responsible for the projection of the world from Śiva. *Bhakti* leads the soul back to Śiva.

God, who is *Para* Śiva, is the ultimate cause of the world. He does not, however, suffer any change or diminution in the process of world-creation. This is because creation takes place through *śakti* which is his inseparable attribute. It is *śakti*, *mūla-prakṛti*, or *māyā* which evolves itself into the phenomenal world. The term *māyā* here means that which naturally pertains to, and eternally resides in, the supreme Brahman. According to Vira-śaivism the world which has come out of Śiva's *śakti* is real, and not an illusory appearance.

The individual soul is a part of Śiva in the sense that it proceeds from Śiva, partakes of his essence, and finds rest in him. But on account of ignorance (*avidyā*) it imagines itself to be different from Him. When ignorance is destroyed through knowledge, it realizes its dependence on Śiva. While it is not different from Śiva, it is not identical with him either. The relation between the two is one of identity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*).

*Kāśmīra-saivism* is a type of monism or non-dualism. It is known by other names such as Trika, Spanda, and Pratyabhijñā. It is called *Trika* because it believes in the principle of three-in-one, viz. *pati-paśu-pāśa* or *Śiva-śakti-aṇu*. The term 'Spanda' refers to the principle of apparent movement or change from the state of absolute unity to the plurality of the world. And the expression *Pratyabhijñā* means 'recognition' which is the way by which the soul realizes its identity with Śiva. The metaphysical view of Kāśmira-śaivism is the result of a synthesis of the different philosophic view-points after introducing the necessary modifications in them. The twenty-four categories and *puruṣa* of the Sāṅkhya system and the *māyā* of the Vedānta have been incorporated in this system after suitable modifications. Ten more categories have been added to them. All these categories are, according to this system, manifestations of Śiva, the Supreme Reality.

The ultimate Reality, according to Kāśmīra-śaivism, is Śiva or Śambhu. Śiva is the self of all beings, moving and non-moving. He is immanent (*viśvamāya*) as well as transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*). He is called *anuttara*, the reality beyond which there is nothing. He is pure-consciousness (*caitanya*), absolute experience (*parāsamvit*), and supreme lord (*parameśvara*). Śiva, the ultimate Reality, is both self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) and self-conscious (*vimarśa*). Unlike the Brahman of Advaita Vedānta, it is dynamic. It brings forth everything from itself. It is the self-conscious will in the sense of absolute freedom of thought and action (*svatantra icchā*).

From Śiva, the world arises even as an appearance or reflection. "As syrup, molasses, jaggery, sugar-balls, candy, etc. are all essenteally the juice of sugar-cane; so the diverse conditions are all of Śambhu, the Śupreme Self." "As in the orb of a mirror pictures such as those of a town or a village shine which are inseparable from it, and yet are distinct from one another and from it, so from the perfectly pure vision of the supreme

Bhairava, this universe, though void of distinction appears distinct part from part and distinct from that vision." The universe is, thus, Śiva's self-manifestation through his *śakti* which is fivefold : (1) *cit-śakti*, the power of intelligence or self-luminosity, (2) *ānanda-śakti*, the power of independence which is bliss, (3) *icchā-śakti*, the power of will or desire, (4) *jñāna-śakti*, the power of knowledge, and (5) *kriyā-śakti*, the power of action.

The individual soul, though identical with the supreme Śiva, suffers in bondage, because it has forgotten its essential nature. The aim of *Pratyabhijñā* is to restore the soul to its essence. The way to its restoration lies in the soul's recognition of its identity with the ultimate Reality.

## X

There is a rich variety of philosophical schools in Hinduism, representing all shades of thinking—theism and absolutism, pluralism and monism. It is so rich and varied that those who are not acquainted with the nature of philosophical thinking in Hinduism will find it extremely difficult to understand it. Metaphysical speculation, according to the Hindu philosophers, is not merely a theoretical affair, but also intimately connected with practice. This is a basic position common to all the schools, whatever may be the philosophical standpoint of each school.

Every school discusses from its own point of view the relation between God, man, and the world. The practical nature of the metaphysical speculation will be obvious from the way in which the discussion in each system is oriented towards the nature and destiny of man. The goal of man, according to all schools of Hinduism, is liberation (*mokṣa*). Empirical life constricts the soul and makes it lose sight of its unfettered nature. It is this which constitutes evil and is the source of all sorrow. Here, the expressions 'evil' and 'sorrow' do not have their usual meanings. That is evil which shrouds the true nature of the soul, and compels it to play a false role. In this sense, transmigration and its cause—ignorance—are evil. They are also the source of sorrow because they convert, as it were, what is infinite and eternal into a finite, helpless creature of time. Here, the term 'sorrow' means finitude and impermanence. So metaphysical discussion in Hinduism, which is goal-oriented, emphasizes the importance of practice for the purpose of attaining the goal, viz. liberation. It is a generally accepted principle in India that conduct counts, not creed, that if the right disciplines are practised, the true insight will follow. Of the two major trends in Hinduism—the theistic and the absolutistic—the former lays stress on devotion to the Deity and the latter on the wisdom of the Absolute. This is the only difference in emphasis. So far as the auxiliary disciplines and the total content of practice are concerned, there is complete agreement.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. *ekaṁ sat, viprā bahuahā vadanti*
2. *Satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma* : *Taittirīya-Upaniṣād*, II, 1
   *vijñanamānandaṁ brahma* : *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, III, 9, 28
3. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, VI, ii, 1
4. V. 11, 1
5. II, 1
6. III, xiv, 2-3
7. III, viii, 8
8. III, 1
9. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, 1, i, 4.
10. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, VI, viii, 7

## III

# HINDU ETHICS

Dr K. R. Sundararajan

The problems of religion, philosophy and morality have from the very early times, in some form or other, occupied a place of importance in the history of mankind. Religion as an encounter of man with something in the higher-order of existence, philosophy as a reflection of the phenomena as a whole and morality as a personal and social code of conduct are interconnected; they constitute the spiritual endeavours of man. In Hinduism the ultimate goal of moral, philosophical and religious activities are the same; they coalesce in the endeavour to attain *mokṣa* (liberation). In a sense, we can speak of moral and philosophical pursuits as being subordinate to the religious; for it is the religious vision that gives the necessary guidance to all other pursuits. However, to progress spiritually, ethical conduct and philosophical knowledge are essential. Without ethics and philosophy religion becomes empty ; and, conversely, without religious guidance the philosophical and ethical endeavours become meaningless.

Hindu ethics emerges from the background of Indian philosophy and its significance can be fully understood only in the context of the Hindu concept of man, his predicament and the law of *karma*. Man who is eternal and free by nature is somehow in chains. This entanglement is the state of *saṃsāra*. It is sorrowful in the long run since it is not the true nature of man. In the state of *saṃsāra*, man is under the domain of the law of *karma* which, in simple language, means the law of cause and effect. Any action performed produces corresponding effects. The ultimate freedom of man is freedom from all laws. To achieve this, one should transcend the ever-involving law of *karma*.

This can be done in two ways; (1) by ceasing to perform actions and thus avoiding all entanglement (*nivṛtti*); (2) by employing the principle of action to extricate oneself from the sphere of action (*prvṛtti*). The path of *nivṛrtti* is almost impossible since man, who is bound, is ever goaded by nature into action. Besides, it implies negation of all positive values. On the other hand, *prvṛtti* is the path of positive action. By engaging himself in meritorious deeds, man gradually progresses on the path of liberation and finally becomes released from the sphere of *saṃsāra*. Hindu ethics, as enunciated by the *Dharma sūtras*, *Dharma s'āstras* and the Epics advocate this view-point. However, the *Gitā* introduces a new element into the sphere of moral action. According to it, *prvṛtti* alone is insufficient to take one beyond *saṃsāra*. So long as one is in the sphere of action, he is bound by the law of *karma* and remains very much within *saṃsāra*. The *Gitā* concept of *niṣkāmakarma* combines in it the principles of *nivṛtti* and *prvṛtti*. Actions are done and duties are performed; but they are discharged in a spirit of detachment and dedication to God. The disinterested action takes one beyond the sphere of *karma* and yet does not negate action.

The religious perspective of the Hindu ethics is quite evident. The Hindu ethics speaks four ideals to be realised (*puruṣārthas*) through the four *āśramas*, (*bramacārya*, *grahasta*, *vanaprasta* and *sannyāsa*). Of the four *puruṣarthas*, *dharma* is the moral action; it is righteousness. It is intimately connected with the other ideals. In relation to the ideal of *mokṣa*, it may be said that *dharma* moralizes *mokṣa* and *mokṣa* spiritualizes *dharma*. The fulfilment of other *āśrama dharma*s are generally required before one takes to the *sannyāsa āśrama*. In other words, the intense moral and social disciplines of the first three *āśramas* provide the necessary training for the last and final spiritual voyage.

The Hindu philosophy of action operates at two levels: (1) personal and (2) social. On the one hand, it enunciates a certain code of conduct which necessarily follows from one's moral nature, and on the other it provides certain duties and obligations that are needed to maintain social harmony. This twofold task of Hindu ethics is derived from the very concept of *dharma*. The word *dharma* is derived from the root *dhri* which means to hold together. The word is used in three different meanings in the religio-philosophical literature. In the metaphysical sense it means 'the essential nature of a thing'; for example, the *dharma* of fire is to burn. The two other meanings are ethical. *Dharma* means those duties and obligations which follow from one's station in society (*varṇāśrama dharma*). *Dharma* also means those actions and duties which are intrinsic to the moral nature of man. In this sense, the third meaning is an extension of the first meaning into the realm of morality. The twofold moral obligations that Hinduism advocates, stress the twofold character of man. "All men have a common nature to which they should conform in their behaviour. Second, different individuals have different peculiarities of temperament and character and so are fitted to perform different kinds of duties in the society."[1]

Thus Hindu ethics speaks of *Sādhāraṇa dharma*, *i.e.* the duties that are common to all and *Varṇāśrama dharma*, *i.e.* duties that depend on one's station or position in society (caste duties). A survey of the different Hindu scriptures shows us that they have laid emphasis on a number of *sādhāraṇa dharmas* (universal virtues). Great importance has been attached to the cultivation of the virtues such as truthfulness, straight forwardness, self-control, compassion, forbearance, freedom from envy, etc. The emphasis on social duties and obligations indicates the social concern of Hindu ethics; an individual is told that his good, spiritual or material, is closely bound up with the good of the other members of the society. The individual occupies a certain position in the society and he has, in accordance with his position, certain responsibilities in maintaining the social harmony and in contributing to the social good.

Our survey of Hindu ethics is intended to show that Hinduism has been from the very beginning committed to vindicate the types of ethical conducts mentioned above. Even the *Dharma sūtrās* which mainly explicate social conduct do not leave one in doubt regarding the importance of these *sādhāraṇa dharmas* which flow from the very moral nature of man. The *Manu Smṛti* enjoins that one should perform actions which are in accordance with one's conscience. However, in this context it may be necessary to note two difficulties with regard to the practice of the common and universal virtues. The Epics and the *Dharma śāstra* speak of two types of duties and obligations: 'duties and obligations that are done under normal conditions' and 'duties and obligations that are to be done under conditions of emergency'. Whereas *sādharaṇa dharma* and the *varṇa dharma* are to be observed strictly under normal conditions, the *Smṛtis* allow exceptions in case of the latter conditions. If one innocent man could be saved from slaughter by uttering a lie, his action is treated as an exception to the rule that 'one should always speak the truth'. However, the *Smṛtis* are clear on this point that exceptions are to be made only when the matter concerns the welfare of other persons or of the society as a whole. If a person is to utter a lie just to save himself, his action becomes sinful.

The second difficulty is concerning the possible conflict between *sādhāraṇa dharma* and *varṇa dharma*. The classical example of this can be seen in Arjuna's dilemma in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. But to understand the significance of any doctrine in Hinduism we need an overall viewing. However, when we take an overall view of Hindu ethics, we become aware that the *sādhāraṇa dharmas* too have a place of importance. One or more of these common virtues have been stressed in different writings.

In the *Ṛg Veda*, the most striking moral idea in that of *ṛta*. *Ṛta* stands for a cosmic order, which includes a moral order and Varuṇa, one of the Vedic gods is its guardian. *Ṛta* is an intelligent principle that regulates the cosmos as well as the individual. Professor Kane finds in *ṛta* "the rudiments of the later doctrine of the rule of *dharma*."[2] *Ṛta* has great ethical and methaphysical significance, writes Dr I.C. Sharma: "It represents the sublime moral order which is inviolable. The inviolability of *ṛta* makes it superior to gods and cosmic ethics on the one hand and individual human beings on the other, because *ṛta* works throughout the cosmos inevitably and justly. This fact implies that even in the case of individual actions *ṛta*, the eternal moral law, is responsible for the apportionment of reward and punishment. Although the Vedic literature does not propound the doctrine of *karma* in a clear-cut fashion, yet it can be said that the action of *ṛta* anticipates the doctrine of *karma*."[3]

*Ṛg veda* lists bad intention, swearing, falsehood, gambling, debt, egoistic enjoyment, cruelty, adultery and theft as vicious and sinful acts. The *Ṛg veda* as well as the *Atharva veda* command honesty, rectitude, truthfulness, fellow-feeling, charity, non-violence, celibacy and faith as important virtues.

The important contribution of the *Brāhmaṇas* to the Hindu ethics consists in the four debts which the individual is required to pay. These are debts to gods, *ṛisis* and seers, forefathers and men in general. The first debt is to be discharged by the performance of sacrifices; second by the preservation and transmission of learning; the third by procreation; and the fourth by giving away food and clothing to others.[4]

The moral sense of the authors of the *Upaniṣads* is definitely more developed than those expressed in the *Vedas* and the *brāhmaṇas*. Though the problem of salvation is central to the *Upaniṣads*, it recognizes that a person who has failed to attain moral purity can never aspire to reach the goal of salvation.[5] The *Upaniṣads* stress certain cardinal virtues like speaking the truth, self-control, giving charities and being compassionate. In the story of *Jābāla*, we find the greatest value attached to truthful speaking. The preceptor agrees to initiate *Jābāla* just for the reason that he spoke the truth.[6] In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it is related in one place that Prajāpati rendered moral advice to gods, men and demons by speaking a single word '*da*'. The gods replied that they understood the meaning as *damyata* (exercise of self-control), men as *dātta* (give charities) and demons understood it as *dayadhvam* (be merciful). It is stated that thunder even today repeats the threefold advice of Prajāpati.[7]

The *Dharma-sūtras* are mainly concerned with defining conduct in relation to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Still they speak of a number of moral virtues which are to be practised irrespective of one's station and position in the society. The *Gautama dharma ṣūtra* mentions eight qualities of the soul. They are :

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compassion for all creatures, forbearance, freedom from anger, purity, quietism, auspiciousness, freedom from service and freedom from covetousness.[8] Similarly the *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra* mentions the following virtues which are to be observed irrespective of one's *varṇa* . "Freedom from anger, from exultation, from covetousness, from perplexity; from hyprocrisy and hurtfulness; truthfulness, silencing slander, freedom from envy, self-denying liberality, extinction of passions, subjugation of senses, peace with all created beings, peacefulness and contentment."[9]

For the *Dharma Sūtras* in general, *dharma* is rooted in the *Vedas* and, therefore, the *Vedas* constitute the source of sacred laws. However, Gautama recognizes two more sources for ascertaining *dharma* and they are, tradition and the practice of those who know the *Vedas*.[10] In the *Manu smṛti* we find that besides the above, one's own conscience has been stated to be one of the sources of moral law. Like the *Dharma Sūtra*, the *Manu Smṛti* also mentions a number of *sādnāraṇa dharmas* : 'Abstention from injuring (creatures), veracity, abstention from unlawfully appropriating (the goods of others), purity and control of (sense) organs.'[11]

In coming to the Epics we find a number of *sādhāraṇa dharmas* being mentioned. Truthfulness, non-injury, charity, compassion, etc. have been stressed in the *Mahābhārata*. However, the greatest concern of the *Mahābhārata* is social good and all virtues are considered to be conducive to this end.[12] Centring on the social good even exceptions to *sādhāraṇa dharmas* are permitted. The action of Yuddhishtra, who is the apostle of truth, uttering a half-truth to Dronācārya is justified in the name of the social good.[13] The Epic makes a distinction between the *dharma* that should be practised under normal conditions and *dharma* that could be practised under conditions of danger or disorder. In the latter case, exceptions both to the practice of *varṇa dharma* and the *sādhāraṇa dharma* are permitted. However, it is emphatically affirmed that exceptions can be taken only when the matter concerns the welfare of others.[14] However, the Epic rather leaves it vague as to what is meant by social good. It undoubtedly includes the preservation of *varṇa* and *āśrama dharmas*. In the section of *rāja dharma*, when Yuddhishtra pained at the havoc caused by the Kurukshetra war expressed a desire to retire to the forest, he is reminded that the first and foremost duty of the king is to preserve the social order which is *varṇa* and *āśrama dharmas*. However, the preservation of this social order cannot be considered the supreme good for one and all to aspire after, since often the Epic shows a questioning attitude to *varṇāśrama dharmas* and more or less stresses individual goodness. Furthermore, the central theme of the *Mahābhārata* is the necessity to fight evil and establish the kingdom of justice and righteousness. These noble ideals appear to be the motivating force behind all events in the Epic. Social good, in this light, then should be a social order where harmony is maintained, noble virtues are practised and the opportunities for spiritual progress for all are provided.

The high moral concern of the *Mahābhārata* is also exemplified in the description of the ideal man that the Epic provides. "He combines learning and character in one, but he has no vanity in regard to that character or goodness; that is the reason why he is everywhere honoured. He is free from disaffection, anger, fickleness and fear. He is free from the various habits of procrastination and he is heroic. He does not go back on his words under the influence of either desire or greed; he practises forgiveness, is firm and free from crookedness. He is truthful and has his senses under control. Gentle in disposition, he speaks well, eats nourishing food, extends courtesy to all, is pure, is sweet in speech, free from jealousy. He is disposed to do good to others, is free from sins, is never happy on seeing others in trouble. He has never quarrelled with anybody for reasons of wealth or enjoyment. He is never carried away by desire; he never praises himself; he is free from envy and is gentle in speech; that is why he is honoured every where."[15]

Rāmā, the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, represented the ideal man in many respects. This could be seen from the very questions that Vālmiki asked Nārada and his reply to those questions. "At the present moment who is there on the earth who has both the virtues of character and physical power ? Who is the person knowing *dharma*, possessing the virtues of gratitude, truthfulness and of fixed purpose? Who is virtuous in character and inclined to serve all beings ? Who is learned, competent, pleasing to the eyes, self-possessed, free from anger, resplendent, not given to belittling others through envy. Who is the man feared even by gods when he gets angry in battle?"[16] In reply Nārada refers to Rāmā and attributes all these qualities to him. Yet the drama of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is typically human. The hero suffers many hardships and is in a moral dilemma, but he upholds the highest principles of morality with determination. The reply of Rāmā to the materialist philosopher Jābāli who urges him to return to Ayodhya, since Dasaratha is dead and hence, the promise given to him ceases to have any significance, illustrates the great moral determination of the hero. "It matters very little whether a person belongs to a high or a low caste", says Rāmā, "only his conduct declares him to be pure or impure. . . If I go on abandoning my solemn assurance (of obeying my father) whom shall I be following and how shall I expect to attain heaven ? (If I follow the advice tendered by Jābāli) I shall be following only an inclination in which I shall be followed by all my subjects; for as are kings disposed to do, so are their subjects . . . Tradition enjoins upon kings the duties of observing truthfulness and avoiding cruelty; truth is the main basis of a kingdom; and the lives of the people depend on truth. The sages and gods have held truth in high regard. People get affliction and trouble from a liar as from a serpent; righteousness or *dharma* consists chiefly in truthfulness which is the root of every good thing."[17]

So far, we have been discussing *sādhāraṇa dharmas* and we have illustrated them with reference to the Hindu scriptures. Now we shall discuss the *varṇāśrama dharma*, namely the duties and the obligations that follow from one's stage of life and station in society. The first reference to the caste-system occurs in *Ṛg Veda*, in the *Puruṣa Sukta* hymn (which is considered by some scholars to have been interpolated). The caste-system is described to have been divinely created : "The brāhmana sprang from the mouth (of the Divine Creator), the Kṣatriya from His arm, the Vaiśya from his thigh and the

Sūdra from His leg."[18]

At this stage, a rigid classification of caste duties did not exist. For example, a Ṛgvedic sage sings: "I myself am a bard; my father is a physician; my mother is a stoṇe-grinder. Thus planning in various ways, desirous of wealth, we live following (others) like cattle, flow soma for Indra's sake."[19] It is interesting to note that the *Ṛg Veda* does not state explicitly the difference in status between the different castes. It is only in the *Taittrīya Samhitā* that the Brahmins are declared to be the highest because they were created from the mouth of the primeval *Puruṣa*. The *Kṣatriyas* are vigorous because they are created from the arms. The *Vaiśyas* are meant to be eaten, referring to their liability to excessive taxation—because they were created from the stomach—receptacle of food; the *Sūdra*, because he was created from the feet, is to be the transporter of others and to subsist by using his feet.[20] The rigidity in respect of functions become more pronounced in the *Dharma śūtras* and the *Dharma śāstras*. The *Manu Dharma śāstra* lays down the following functions to be performed by the different *varṇas*. "To Brahmins be assigned the teaching and studying (of the Veda), the performing of acts of sacrifice for their own benefit and for others, the giving and accepting (of alms). He commanded the Kṣatryas to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to the study (of the Veda) and to abstain from attaching themselves to sensual pleasures. To the Vaiśya he assigned the tendering of the cattle, the bestowing of gifts, the offering of sacrifices, the studying (of the Veda), the lending of money and the cultivation of land. One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the Śūdras, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes."[21]

*Manu dharma śāstra* affirms the superiority of the Brahmins.[22] However, the high status implies great responsibilities and demands moral integrity. The *Dharma Sūtras* continue this trend and impose high ethical standards on the Brahmanas. They carefully regulate the different aspects of a Brahmin's individual and social life.

In contrast to the rigid code of conduct prescribed in the *Dharma śāstras,* the approach of the Epics to *Varṇāśrama*

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*dharma* is refreshing in spirit. The *Mahābhārata* generally accepts the divine origin of the castes.[23] It also explains the caste-system on the basis of colour. The colour of Brāhmins was white, of Kṣatriya red, of the Vaiśya yellow and Śūdra black. However, the difficulty involved in this theory is also acknowledged. Questioned by Bharadvāja, if the *varṇa* is decided on the distinction of colour, then there is intermixture of colours in every *varṇa*, Bhrigu who earlier expounded this theory says :

"There was nearly no distinction between the different orders. The whole world at first consisted of Brāhmanas. Created equal, men have in consequence of their acts became distributed into different orders." Now Bhrigu explains the distinctions on the basis of the differences in functions and temperaments. "The whole world at first consisted of the Brāhmanas. They then became fond of indulging in desires and enjoying pleasures, possessed of the attribute of severity and wrath, endued with courage and unmindful of the duties of peity and worship—those Brāhmanas possessing the attribute of passion became Kṣtriyas. Those Brāhmanas again who without attending to the duties laid down for them, became possessed of both the attributes of goodness and passion and took to professions of cattle-rearing and agriculture, became Vaiśyas. Those Brāhmanas again that became fond of untruth and injuring other creatures, possessed of cupidity—engaged in all kinds of acts for living, and fallen away from purity of behaviour, and thus wedded to the attribute of darkness, became Śūdras. Separated by these occupations, Brāhmanas falling away from their order, became members of the three orders."[24]

These different explanations point to the fact that a questioning attitude existed towards the rigidity of the caste-system. There is an interesting dialogue in the *Mahābhārata* between Yuddhishtra and a serpent, in which Yuddhishtra emphasizes that character alone should form the basis for caste distinctions. When asked by the serpent as to who is a Brahmin, Yuddhishtra replies : "Know him to be Brahmin who is truthful, charitable, forgiving, gentle, soft, merciful and who behaves according to *dharma*." The serpent further asked whether a Śudra with these qualities could be called a Brahmin. Yuddhishtra replied : "If a Śudra shows these qualities and a Brahmin does not show them, then that Śudra is not Śudra, neither that Brahmin a Brahmin. Know him only to be a Brahmin who reveals these characteristics and him to be a Śudra who does not reveal them". The serpent contends that if a Brahmin was to be known by his behaviour alone then the whole system of *varṇa* becomes useless. To this Yuddhishtra replies : "Men of all *varṇas* can produce children by using woman of all *varṇas* and hence all *varṇas* are but a mixture. Thus it is difficult to test the *varṇa* of an individual. Speech, sexual desire, birth and death are common to all human beings. So it is difficult to decide with regard to *varṇa*. So one who possesses the best of the behaviour and has gone through all *samskāras* is a Brahmin."[25]

Similarly with regard to occupations of the different castes, the *Mahābhārata* shows a flexible attitude. A long list of professions other than those traditionally prescribed for the Brahmins is given in the *Śāntiparva*. It is explicitly said that a Brahmin is allowed to follow the occupations of the two other *varṇa* groups if he could not maintain himself by his own.[26] However along with these liberal views, we find also the voice of orthodoxy. The traditional classification of castes on the basis of birth finds a place in the Epics, and the faithful performance of the worship of different caste duities is often glorified.[27] Dharmavyādhya, who was a Śudra had developed an ethical personality befitting a Brahmin and yet he affirmed that he should perform his *svadharma*, which was the butchering of animals since that alone could guarantee his spiritual progress. "O Brahmin, mine is a hereditary profession and is proper for the family from which I spring. So I shall act according to my *dharma* assigned to me by providence according to my past deeds."[28]

The rigidity of *varṇa system* (the impossibility of one moving from a lower caste to higher caste) in one's lifetime is illustrated in the story of Mātanga. To Mātanga who tries his utmost through rigorous austerities to become a Brahmin

Indra says that it is impossible for a man of low caste to attain brahminhood by any amount of austerities. Finally, Mātanga cries in sheer desparation : "I am a person who has concentrated on becoming a brahmin, who has attained release from happiness and misery, who has no family. I am always non-violent and controlled in respect of my senses. Even then how is it that I am not fit to obtain brahminhood ? What bad luck for me that even though I am the knower of *dharma*, I am doomed to this position due to the fault of my father. I am sure that a man may strive and strive, but fate is still powerful."[29]

We have said earlier that the higher the *varṇa*, the greater are the responsibilities and in this sense the *Mahābhārata* compares Brahmins to bullocks who carry the burden of social responsibilitles on their backs.[30] Among the twice-born, namely *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya* only a *Brāhmaṇa* is permitted to teach and, in this sense, his responsibilities are enormous. On account of the high intellectual and moral life of Brahmins and their responsibilities, they are given certain preferences in judicial matters and in the distribution of properties.

The life of the twice-born is divided into four stages (*āśramas*) : (i) studentship, (ii) being a married householder, (iii) being a forest-dweller and (iv) being a hermit. In contrast to the four stages that a twice-born will have to complete, a person of a lower birth has only one *āśrama*, namely the stage of being householder.

Detailing the conduct for a student (*brahmacari*), Manu says : "A member of the twice-born caste must study the whole *Veda* together with the *Upaniṣads* ; he should also perform the various kinds of austerities and rites enjoined upon him by the *Vedas*."[31] The student should stay with his preceptor and adhere strictly to the following restrictions : "Everyday, having bathed and being purified, he must offer libations of water to gods, sages, manes . . . Let him abstain from honey, meat, perfumes, garland, substances (used for) flavouring (food), women, all substances turned sour and from doing injury to living creatures."[32] He should also avoid "anointing his body, applying collyrium to his eyes, and the use of shoes and an umbrella, from (sensual) desire, anger, covetousness, dancing, singing and playing (musical instruments)."[33]

Thus disciplined, the student returns with the permission of the preceptor after the completion of his studies. Then he gets married and enters the next stage of life. The stage of a householder, according to Manu is the most essential since all the other *āśramas* are dependent on this *āśrama* for their support and substenance. "As all rivers, both great and small, find a resting-place in the ocean, even so men of all orders find protection with the householder."[34]

Manu enjoins that a person should take particular care to keep his wife satisfied physically and emotionally. A woman should be honoured and adored by her father, husband and brothers-in law. "Where they (women) are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. In the family where the husband is satisfied with the wife and the wife with the husband, continued good luck prevails. Where the female relatives live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes ; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers."[35]

The daily life of the hosueholder consists in the performance of five sacrifices ; teaching and studying which constitute *Brahma yajña* ; the offering of water and food, which is the sacrifice to the ancestors (*pitru yajña*), making sacrifices in the sacred fire which is *devayajña* (sacrifices to the gods), offering crumbs of food to insects which is *bhūta yajña* and the honouring of guests which is called *atithiyajña*.[36] The householder should honour his guests and never fail to give alms to the needy. Even if the householder is not able to offer food, he should provide the guest with a resting-place, water to drink, and utter pleasing and kind words.[37] To those who are sick and to the newly married women, infants and pregnant women he should give food even before his guests.[38] A householder who cooks food and eats first without giving to his guests incurs sin and "one who prepares food for himself (alone), eats nothing but sin ; for it is ordained that the food which remains after (the performance) of sacrifices shall be the meal of the virtuous men."[39]

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After leading the life of a householder for a considerable period of time and having discharged all the household commitments, when his sons have begotton children, and when his skin becomes wrinkled and his hair becomes white, he should enter the next stage of life which is *vanaprastāśrama*.[40] "He should abandon all food raised by cultivation, forsake his belongings and go to the forest, either committing his wife to the care of his sons or accompanied by her."[41] A person at this stage should also perform the five *yajñas* which the householder should do, but he may make the offerings with various kinds of food fit for the ascetics, with herbs, roots and fruits ; his life is a life of intensive study and contemplation.[42] It involves severe penances conducive to his spiritual well-being and progress.[43]

After the stage of *vanaprastha* comes the stage of *sannyāsa*. Manu points out that one should take to this *āśrama* only after having fulfilled three debts in his life. They are : debts to (i) the great sages, (ii) the ancestors and (iii) the gods. "A twice-born who seeks final liberation without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons and without having offered sacrifices sinks downwards."[44] A *sannyāsi* is not bound to perform the various household sacrifices ; for this very reason, great moral discipline is expected of him. He should practise *ahimsa* in the true sense of the term and should avoid even the smallest injury to living beings.[45] He should patiently bear harsh words, insult none.[46] "Against an angry man let him not in return show anger ; let him bless when cursed and let him not utter speech, devoid of truth, scattered at the seven gates."[47] "Delighting in what refers to the soul, sitting (in postures prescribed by the *yoga*), independent (of external help), entirely abstaining from sensual enjoyments, with himself as his only companion, he shall live in the world, desiring the bliss (of final liberation)."[48]

The four *āśramas* we have enumerated so far stress the integrated and balanced growth of an individual. The scheme provides a proper balancing of the four aims of life, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, i.e. wealth, pleasure, practice of righteousness and liberation respectively. The *puruṣārthas* are the implicit admittance of the variegated strivings of human beings ranging from instinctual cravings of the senses to the desire for the spiritual upliftment. "Hindu thinkers have recognized that men possess a complex personality which seeks expression through four channels : his instincts and natural desires, his craving for power and prosperity, his social aims, and his spiritual urge. These are the four ends of man ; the aesthetically beautiful expression of his desires and natural instincts (*kāma*), material property (*artha*), the ethically sound life (*dharma*) and the spiritually free life (*mokṣa*). The first three ends are related to man's empirical life, while the fourth refers to his spiritual life. A truely integrated personality and an essentially full life are possible by the proper correlation of these four ends of man by so regulating one's natural desires and one's material welfare by the righteous principles of *dharma* that these are subordinated to the ultimate end of liberation. The Hindu theory and practice relating to the organization of man's individual life and his social existence can best be understood in the light of the ends of man."[49]

Before proceeding further we may discuss the possibility of identifying certain cardinal virtues emphasized in Hindu ethics. Professor D.S. Sarma identifies purity, self control, detachment, truth and non-violence as the cardinal virtues and says that these ideals 'have given the people of India the idea of a good life.'[50] It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that with the increasing importance of *varṇa dharma*, there have been tendencies to play down the importance or *sādhāraṇa dharmas* in the context of social obligations and duties. But this is no denying the fact that the *spiritual* values of these *sādhāraṇa dharmas* have never been questioned by the Hindu scriptures. In a Hindu society, the *sannyāsi* in the *āśrama* scale and a Brahmin in the *varṇa* stratification occupies the highest position. On them the practice of these cardinal virtues to their fullest extent is obligatory. In this sense, the other approximations or exceptions allowed are only concessions to human variety and limitedness.[51] A householder cannot practise the virtue of non-killing (*ahimsa*) to the fullest extent and, hence, of the five *yajñas* (sacrifices), he performs *bhuta yajña* i.e. offering to insects and animals. On the other hand, a *sannyāsi* is expected to practise *ahimsa* totally and he should avoid injuring living beings even to the smallest extent. Considering this aspect, perhaps we may venture to suggest that the exceptions allowed, or the precedence of *varṇa dharma* over *sādhārana dharma* is only a temporary phase in the spiritual evolution of man, a process in which *varṇa* will be ultimately transcended and man will adhere to the moral principles intrinsic to his being with firmness.[52]

The ethics of the *Gītā* represents a signal point in the history of Hindu ethics, which while it includes all traditional classifications, gives a new direction, greater harmony and extension of meaning. The fundamental ethical idea of the *Gītā* is non-attachment. Non-attachment in its own right leads to negation of all positive values, to a state of inaction. The *Gītā* recognizes that activity is basic to a human being and it is his very nature to be engaged in one activity or another. The *Gītā* combines the spiritual value of non-attachment with the basic factor of human activity and produces a synthesis conducive to spiritual progress. The doctrine of *niṣkāma karma* (disinterested action) spiritualizes all actions and makes them a part and parcel of spiritual discipline.

To Arjuna who feels dejected at the prospect of fighting his own kith and kin, Kṛṣṇa urges the performance of his own duty as *Kṣatriya* to fight a righteous war. Kṛṣṇa points to the eternal nature of the soul and says that though the physical frame may perish, yet the spiritual life is never born nor dies. However, the spiritual nature of the self has not been realized because of human ignorance and passions which cloud the mental sky and blur the vision. To have the true vision of self, Kṛṣṇa says, one should purify oneself through the cultivation of complete detachment. However, this should not be done through a total withdrawal from the world, and from the duties and obligations, which as a member of a community one has to discharge. On the other hand, it is essential that one should fulfil his *svadharma* and yet in the very process further his spiritual good. This could be done, Kṛṣṇa says, if one perform one's duty without any hope of reward or fear of punishment. As the spirit is pure and free, no results of actions can ever affect it. All bondage is due to the attitude with which an action is done.

The theory of the *Gītā* is that if actions are performed with a detached mind, their consequences do not bind the performer. This distinctly implies that the morality of an action depends not on the external consequences, but upon the inner motive. This inner criterion of the *Gītā* stands in contrast to the pragmatic criterion of Truth emphasized by the Epics that is based on the results of actions (social good).

According to the doctrine of unattachment, even sacrifices should be performed without any desire for the fruits, *i.e.* purely on the basis of the duties enjoined. Similarly *dāna* (gift) is classified as *sāttvika*, *rajasa* and *tamasa* on the basis of gifts made without any consideration reward, gifts made for purposes of future benefits and gifts made with indifference and negligence respectively.

The exercise of unattachment leads one to the realization of the ideal *samatva*. This *samatva* can be attained in three stages: (1) subjective equanimity, (2) objective equanimity and (3) fullness of equanimity. Stressing the subjective aspect, the *Gītā* says that he whom sense affections and physical trouble cannot affect in any way, "who is unmoved by pleasure and pain, he is fitted for immortality."[53] This subjective equanimity leads to objective equanimity, where he desires the good of all and "looks upon all as he would look upon himself."[54] The culmination of this development is when a man transcends all the corporeal and mundane characteristics of the threefold *guṇas* and realizes that these *guṇas* are extraneous to his own spiritual nature.[55] Then he transcends the sphere of all worldly qualities and attains *Brahmanhood*.

The ultimate concern of the *Gītā*, like other Hindu scriptures, is *mokṣa* or liberation. However, the importance of the *Gītā* lies in having taken cognizance of the human situations, dispositions and social involvements. By the magical touch of unattachment the human nature and the institutions are spiritualized and variegated human endeavours are integrated. Down through the ages, the ethical teaching of the *Gītā* has remained a source of inspiration and has explicated a middle path, avoiding a complete absorption in otherworldly ecstasy on the one hand and a total indulgence in worldliness on the other.

The *varṇa dharma* codified by the *Dharmasūtras* have been, in general, accepted by the Hindu systems of philosophy. These systems which focus their attention on questions of epistemology, metaphysics and logic have implicitly recognized the moral course enunciated by the *Dharamsūtras*. However, we still hear of protests against the *varṇāśramadharma* from time to time. In the *Śaṅkara Vijaya*, we find that a man of low caste – a *chandāla* —when asked by Śaṅkara to move away from his path seems to have reacted, "which should go away, the body or the self? As for the body, it is of the same composition as that of everybody; as to the soul it is one and all-pervading." Śaṅkara seems to have realized at once that—that was no ordinary *chandāla* and saw a glimpse of Lord Śiva Himself in the *chandāla*. Then Śaṅkara sang a hymn in which he declared that the one who has realized the non-dual is his master, whether he be a Brahmin or a *chandāla*. According to the Southern school of Vaiṣṇavism, Rāmānuja, the great *Vaiṣṇava Ācārya,* contrary to the rule of secrecy of the sacred *mantras* climbed the top of the temple and proclaimed the *mantras* for the benefit of everyone. Censured by his *Ācārya* for the action, Rāmānuja replied that he was prepared to go to eternal perdition for the sake of many who would be saved by these *mantras*. Again two of the ten *Ālvārs*, the mystic saints of the fold of Vaiṣṇavism were men of lower castes. In the great *Bhakti* Movement of the later Middle Ages, the caste distinctions came in for severe criticism. Medieval India produced a number of great religious poets and saints who came from lower castes and yet commanded respect and following. Among the disciples of Rāmānanda, Sena was a barber, Dhana was a Jat and Rai was an out-caste. There is a saying among the *Vaiṣṇava* devotees: 'No body inquires the caste of him who worships Hari, to Hari indeed he belongs.'

In spite of the protests made against the caste distinctions, it should be acknowledged that these distinctions have always continued to retain a dominant position in the Hindu community. The liberalist movements among the different systems of Hindu philosophy and religion produced counter-movements of orthodoxy. In reaction to the Southern school of Vaiṣṇavism, we have mentioned earlier, the Northern school (*Vadagalai*) insisted on the strict adherence to *Varṇa* distinctions and discredited the stories of caste violations by Rāmānuja as exaggerated accounts.

The liberal movements within Hinduism find their inspiration in the metaphysical teachings of the *Upaniṣads.* The ultimate nature of *ātman* and the destiny of man, *i.e. mokṣa*, made caste distinctions meaningless. What seemed more important to the Upanisadic thinkers were the practice of virtues and nobility of character. However, the *varṇa* system which was originally a pragmatic arrangement had come to stay. They were subsequently sanctified and made into rigid watertight compartments. It is obvious that the caste-system, as expounded in the *Dharmśāstras*, was loaded in favour of the higher castes and especially Brahmins who were supposed to bear heavy responsibilities for social well-being. It often reflected gross inequalities and cruel injustice.

In the modern period, the challenges facing the caste-system are very different. Through the introduction of Western technology, a new type of society has been evolved. The English education has brought in the Western ideals and a rich humanistic tradition. Through improved methods of communications, men have been brought closer and exposed to other cultural and religious systems. The striking similarities in different religious traditions, customs and manners have created a feeling of oneness and desire for universal brotherhood.

This cultural encounter led, in the long run, to a mature attempt to re-examine the basis of Hindu social conventions and to distinguish between what is extraneous and essential in the Hindu tradition. This had two aspects: negatively, it was a criticism of what was regarded as spurious and extraneous; positively, it was an appreciation of basic values and a desire to vindicate them.

The reformations that were initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy were against the customs of *Suttee*, child-marriage and polygamy and in general emphasized the upliftment of women in the

Hindu society. Influenced by the ideals of equality and responsibility, Raja Ram Mohan Roy strived to show that these deplorable customs did not reflect the true spirit of the ancient Hindu religion. He wanted the revival of the true heritage of the Hindus, so that it could absorb new elements and march on the path of progress. Swami Dayanand was another constructive critic of the Hindu social structure. Whereas he was in favour of abolishing evils that had crept into the system, he appreciated the useful role it once played in the past. He pointed out that birth was not then the criterion for classification; in its original form, Swami Dayanand believed that it could be relevant in the modern context also. He suggested that *guṇa* (character), *karma* (action) and *svabhāva* (nature) should become the criteria of caste.[56] He also considered untouchability as a heinous crime without any sanction in the Vedas. To him it was a matter of individual and social degeneration. He, therefore, worked for the removal of untouchability. Mahatma Gandhi while paying tributes to Swami Dayanand wrote: "Among the many rich legacies that Swami Dayanand has left to us, his unequivocal pronouncement against untouchability is undoubtedly one."

Swami Vivekananda's approach to *varnāśramadharma* is the result of deep appreciation of the principles underlying the Hindu social system. He points out that caste system is primarily socialistic in outlook. An individual cannot work for his good alone ; on the other hand, he should identify his good with the welfare of his community. "In India you cannot, on account of your wealth, power or any other merit leave your fellows behind and make common cause with your superiors . . . If you want to rise to a higher caste in India, you have to elevate your caste first, and there is nothing in your onward path to hold you back." In an interview, Swami Vivekananda declared: "The plan of India is to make everybody a Brahmin. If you read the history of India, you will find attempts to have been always made to raise the lower classes. Many are the classes that have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole world becomes Brahmin."[57]

The general ethics of Swami Vivekananda could be studied through his lectures on *karmayoga*. Reflecting the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, he says that one should perform actions and fulfil his duties without attachment to the fruits thereof. *Karmyoga* which is mainly intended for a householder teaches that one can achieve salvation through his moral deeds done in a spirit of detachment.[58] It says : "Do not give up the world, live in the world, imbibe its influences, as much as you can . . ."[59] A householder should hold his life as a sacrifice for the welfare of others and perform his duties accordingly.[60] One who works with detachment rises above good and evil and is led to the realization of freedom which is the supreme end of man's spiritual endeavour.

To Mahatma Gandhi also *Gītā* remained the source of inspiration and guidance in his reconstruction of the Hindu thought. Gandhi reacted to the prevalent caste distinctions with vehemence. He discredited caste superiority and called it a monstrous parody of *varṇaśramadharma*. According to him, all *varṇas* are equal and different social tasks are equally important and essential. Gandhi considered the practice of untouchability a heinous crime against humanity. It is poisoning Hinduism "as a drop of arsenic in pure milk."[61]

Gandhi's ethical philosophy is centred on the concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence). According to him, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, which is set up in the background of a battlefield teaches non-violence.[62] The battle that is mentioned is interpreted as a battle within the mind of man. The *Gītā* advocates the building up of an active moral and spiritual mind.

Accordingly, Gāndhi, advocating non-violence as the central principle of human action and as a *sādhana* for final liberation, points out that non-violence implies positive action. It has no room for cowardice, he says, since "non-violence is not resignation from all real fighting against wickedness. On the contrary, non-violence of my conception is a more active and real fight against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness".[63] To achieve such a mental state of non-violence, a thorough discipline of body, life and mind is required. According to Gandhi, non-violence is love ; it aims at transforming the wicked person by patient suffering.[64] Gandhi maintains that non-

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violence is something intrinsic to human nature and relevant to all spheres of human activity.[65] *Satyāgraha* is an extension of the principle of non-violence. It consists of three types of positive actions : (1) non-cooperation, (2) civil disobedience and (3) fasting. Gandhi believes that man shares the spirit and has something of the divine. "Hence even the oppressed masses can be trained to superhuman courage and love that *satyāgraha* demands; while the oppressors, no matter how ruthless and violent they are, never will be quite beyond the reach of suffering love. The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the fire of suffering, without anger and malice."[66]

Among the recent Indian philosophers who have sought to explicate the relevance of Hindu philosophy and highlight its basic tenets, Dr Radhakrishnan stands foremost. He has examined the basic values in Hinduism and has projected their universal significance and relevance.

Dr Radhakrishnan mentions the four *purṣarthas, kama, artha dharma* and *mokṣa* and says that these *purṣarthas* in the Hindu fold show clearly that Hinduism does not "support the view that one has to attain spiritual freedom by means of a violent rupture with ordinary life."[67] He similarly mentions the four stages of life (*āśramas*) : *brahmacārya*, *grahasta*, *vanaprasta* and *sannyāsa*. However, he maintains that a *sannyāsi* is not one who runs away from the society, but he can be "a great active missionary of noble life instead of merely one who is despaired of life and runs away from it to mountain tops or into the depths of forests to find peace which he has failed to achieve in the rough and tumble of life."[68]

The institution of caste, Radhakrishnan says, illustrates "the spirit of comprehensive synthesis characteristic of the Hindu mind with its faith in the collaboration of races and the co-operation of cultures."[69] Paradoxical it may seem, he continues, the system of caste is the outcome of tolerance and trust. *Varṇa*, caste, had originally reference to colour. The *varṇa* classification was a method through which the different races having different colours were brought together and racial harmony achieved. Further the rules of caste also brought about an adjustment between different professional groups supporting and in turn being supported by other members. It avoided cruel competition and brought about harmony and co-operation.[70] Furthermore, "the caste idea of vocation as service with its tradition and spiritual aims, never encouraged the notion of work as a degrading servitude to be done grudgingly and purely from the economic motive."[71]

Radhakrishnan is undoubtedly aware of the rigidities that have developed in the caste-system and the degradation that has set in it. However, he believes that "while caste resulted in much evil, there are some sound principles underlying it."[72]

Defining *dharma*, Radhakrishnan points out that it is essentially a combination of ethics and religion. The goal of *dharma*, according to him, is a "double object of happiness on earth and of salvation."[73] The purpose of ethics is to discipline human nature, leading to the realization of the spiritual.[74] Ethical life emphasizes goodwill, pure love, disinterestedness and non-violence as the practical code of conduct.[75]

Detailing the ultimate goal of spiritual realization on the lines of *Śaṅkara*, Radhakrishnan faces the question of the utility of moral principles if ultimately the moral sphere is to be transcended. This question confronts all ethical theories that present a transcendental goal; and this problem is acute especially in the context of non-dual philosophy in which the world is negatived at the ultimate level. In his *Idealist view of life*, he says : "To seek for liberation from the wheels of births and deaths is nothing more than to rise to the spiritual level from the merely ethical. The spiritual is not the extension of the ethical. It is a new dimension altogether dealing with things eternal."[76] However , he affirms that "the metaphysical oneness of *Brahman* does not in any sense prejudice the validity of ethical distinctions on empirical level."[77] Even a *jīvanmukta* is vitally interested in the welfare of the world.[78] The doctrine of *māyā* does not nullify the empirical world to the level of illusion; but accepts it as the limited, relative and instrumental reality. Hence ethical actions in Radhakrishnan's view continue to play a significant role in spiritual life.

In conclusion, we may briefly sum up the salient features of Hindu ethics. (1) In Hinduism, morality constitutes an integral part of religion. Moral endeavours are ultimately directed to the goal of liberation and, hence, a firm adherence to and a practice of moral virtues and fulfilment of moral duties and obligations are part of the spiritual exercise. (2) The central concept of Hindu ethics is *dharma* which has rich and variegated meanings. In the ethical context, it means universal virtues which flow from human nature and social duties and obligations depending on one's disposition and peculiarities. (3) A significant direction and synthesis between morality and religion is arrived at by emphasizing the *Gītā's* disinterested action. The relation between ethics and religion at this context becomes more intimate, since disinterested action combines both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, the central elements of morality and religion, respectively. (4) The modern Hindu ethics vindicates the relevance of basic Hindu ethical concepts. The Hindu thinkers have generally shown that the caste-system has become vicious and ignoble. But they have pointed out that the *varṇa* in its genuine form has still significance and meaning to the modern man. In the midst of growing materialism, scientism and agnosticism, the Hindu thinkers have emphasized the spiritual basis of ethics. *Bhagavad- Gītā* has remained the main source of inspiration to the Hindu ethical thinkers. Exposed as they were to Western ideologies and Christian thought, they had found deep meaning and lasting message in this 'Song Celestial' for curing the maladies of modern world.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. N.K. Devaraja, *The Mind and the Spirit of India*, p. 159
2. P.V. Kane, "Sāmānya Dharma", *Indian Inheritance*, Vol. 3, p. 42
3. I.C. Sharma, *Ethical Philosophies of India*, p. 72
4. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1,7,2, 1-6

The idea makes its first appearance in *Tattrīya Samhitā* (vi. 3-10,65) where, however, only three debts are mentioned. References to these debts are frequent in the *Dharma Sāstras.*

5. "The person who has not learnt to desist from evil action, who lacks inner quiet and concentration, whose mind lacks balance can never attain Brahman." (*Katho Upaniṣad*, 1.2.21) "Victory goes to truth and not to falsehood; by truth is paved the way of gods (which leads to salvation)." (*Praśna Upaniṣad*, II, 1.6)

6. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, IV, 9
7. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, V. 2
8. *Gautama Dharma Sutra*, VIII. 13 (Buhler's translation)
9. *Āpastamba Dharma Sutra*, I, 8.23.6
10. *Gautama Dharma Sutra*, I, 1-2
11. *Manu Smṛti*, X.63 (Buhler's translation)
12. "Truthful speech is commendable; more commendable is speech directed to do good; in my opinion that is truth which is the greatest benefit to living beings" (*Mahābhārata. Śānti Parva*' 393.13)
13. ibid., VII, 190, 46-47
14. ibid., XII, 109.5
15. ibid., XII, 230, 5-8
16. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 'Bala Kānda', I.2-4
17. ibid., 'Ayodhya Kānda' 113.4.8-12
18. *Rg Veda*, X.90.12
19. ibid., IX.112.3

Professor Kane illustrates this flexibility by citing inter-marriages between brahmins and the members of other castes. "Even in the time of Yājñavalkya and Parāsara, a brahmin was permitted to take food at the home of such sudras as his *dāsa*, cowherd, barber, a tenant of his land" (*Dharma Sāstra*, volume, V, part II, pp. 1632-33)

20. *Taittrīya Brāhmaṇa*, I.4.4; also see *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XII, 4.4.6
21. *Manu Smṛti*, I.88-91 (Buhler's translation)
22. ibid., I.93
23. Mbh., XII.73.4-5
24. ibid., XII.181.4-10
25. ibid., III.177.25-32
26. ibid., XII.79.1-2
27. ibid., XII.77.2-9
28. ibid., III.207.21
29. For the story see *Mbh.* XIII.30 (Bom. Ed.)

Instead of the character determining the *varṇa*, it is suggested that character is determined by one's birth in a particular *varṇa*. In this sense, a person, who belongs to a lower caste however much nobly he may act, is still not free from the deficiencies of character that is characteristic of his *varṇa*. Bhīṣma says : "A person can never hide his inherent character, much less a leopard can hide the spots on his body. And in spite of persons following different occupations and exhibiting different behaviours, they very often reveal their true character accidentally." (*Mbh.* XIII.48.39-46)

30. *Mbh.* XIII.30 (Cal. Ed.)
31. *Manu Smṛti*, II.165
32. ibid., II.176-177 (Buhler's translation)
33. ibid.. 178 (Buhler's translation)

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34. ibid., vi.90

It is interesting to see that the *Mahābhārata* shows signs of tension between *grahasthāśrama* and *sannyasāsrama*. In the 'Santi parva there are many passages which establish the superiority of the *sannyāsarama* over *grahasthāsrama* (see *Mbh.* vii.277.5; *Mbh.* xii.260). However, there are equally emphatic passages which stress the need to complete *grahasthāsrama* before taking *sannyāsarama* (see *Mbh.* xii; 261.5; xii.161.10)

35. *Manu Smṛti*, ii.55-56 (Buhler's translation)

36. ibid., iii.70

37. ibid., iii.101

"These guests could belong to any social strata. Manu referring to the householder's duty in this respect says : "Let him offer to his guests seats, beds, attendance on departure and honour (while they stay); to the most dlstinguished in the best form, to the lower ones in the lower form, to equals in equal manner"

38. *Manu Smṛti* iii.115

39. ibid., iii.118 (Buhler's translation)

40. ibid., vi.2

41. ibid., vi.3

42. ibid,, vi.5

43. "In summer let him expose himself to the heat of the fire; during the rainy season live under the open sky and in winter be dressed in wet clothes, thus gradually increasing the rigour of his austerities." (vi.23, Buhler)

44. ibid., vi.37

45. ibid., vi.40

46. ibid., vi.47

47. ibid., vi.48

The seven gates are mind, intellect and the five senses.

48. ibid., vi.4

49. R.N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism." *Religion of the Hindus*, ed. by Kenneth W. Morgan, p. 32

50. D.S. Sharma, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," *Religion of the Hindus*, ed. by Kenneth W. Morgan, p. 12

51. "Hinduism takes into account all factors of human personality, the body, mind, soul and spirit and prescribes a graded discipline for all. It advocates a complete and integrated life in which the claims of all parts of man's nature are reconciled and harmonized." ibid., p. 12

52. Here we may perhaps cite the passionate utterances of Swami Vivekananda. He says: The plan of India is to make everybody a Brahmin. If you read the history of India you will find attempts to have been always made to raise the lower classes. Many of the classes have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole world

becomes Brahmin." The approximations and exceptions permitted with regard to the practice of cardinal virtues are perhaps reminders to those who are high in the ladder, of the many who are in the low level of spiritual evolution and the need to raise them to the heights.

53. *Gita*, II.15

54. ibid., VI.32; see also V.18

55. ibid., XIV. 20, 23, 26

56. *Satyārtha Prakāsh*, pp. 129-129

57. Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, volume, v, p. 214

58. ibid., Volume, I, p. 85

59. ibid., p. 81

60. ibid., p. 4

61. Quoted in *Religious Hinduism* by Jesuit Scholars, p. 301

62. Mahadev Desai, *Gītā According to Gāndhi*, p. 127

63. Quoted in R.N. Srivastava's *Contemporary Indian Thought*, p. 194

64. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 1934, p. 58

65. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 1924, p. 398

66. Fr Soares, "Mahatma Gandhi', *Religious Hinduism*, p. 304

67. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 352

68. A.R. Wadia, "The Social Philosophy of Radhakrishnan", *The Philosophy of Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. by Schilpp, p. 765

69. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View af Life*, p, 67

70. ibid., p. 79

71. ibid., p, 80

72. ibid., p. 90

73. Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hinduism*, p, 22

74. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, volume 2, p. 304

75. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 83; see also *Religion and Society*, p. 108

76. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, p. 304

77. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Volume 2, p. 621

78. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 109

# IV

# HINDU MYSTICISM

PROFESSOR S.S. RAGHAVACHAR

## I

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Mystic experience occupies an important place in all the religious traditions of the world. The originators of the different religious traditions are credited with mystic experience ; the goal of the spiritual life of the followers is conceived as the attainment of an analogous experience. Hence a consideration of the nature of mysticism is a necessity for an adequate understanding of religion as such.

Apart from the specifically religious context, mysticism demands attention from other quarters as well. Philosophers responsible for the idealist standpoint in metaphysics, with no particular religious loyalties, have been drawn towards mystical elements in the philosophical systems of Plato, Spinoza, Bradley, etc. It has often happened in recent times that thinkers, dissatisfied with the current naturalistic trend in philosophy claiming support from the empirical and scientific spirit of the age, have yearned for an experiential basis for a spiritual and idealistic conviction. It is easy to distinguish science as such and the naturalistic superstructure of philosophy claiming support from science. But unless the philosophical alternative to naturalism exhibits an experiential foundation, it has no chances of being admitted. Hence mysticism has been eagerly appropriated as furnishing the required empirical and factual bases for the recovery of faith.

Mysticism, therefore, has acquired in recent thought focal importance as (a) a vital factor in religion, (b) as a fundamental element in idealist metaphysics and also, (c) as an effective answer to naturalism, in terms of irreducible experience rather than uncertain ratiocination.

## II

The meaning of the term 'mysticism' is fairly obvious and is readily understood in the context of the culture and the community utilizing the term. Hence I have indicated the importance of mysticism even before discussing its definition. But an attempt to outline the implications of the meaning is necessary for further discussion. The experience describable as 'mystical' is other than sense-experience. Particular sense-experiences may occasion the occurrence of mystical experience, but the core of that experience transcends the realm of the senses. It is also other than the exercise of mere reason or the inferential propensity. In other words, it is not a speculative conjecture or logical construction of any entity or entities. It is a species of perception, having all the immediacy of direct experience. The experience, in question, therefore, is the direct awareness, not arrived at on the basis of some antecedent ground and through the application of the laws of logic. It is a primary awareness, and not a derivative working out of consequences.

These two negative characterizations of the experience carry the further implication that the content of the experience transcends all sense-data and all that requires mediation. The nature of the experience is at once transcendent and immanent in relation to non-mystical experience. It is supersensuous and, hence, transcendent ; it is perceptual and direct and, hence, immanent.

It is perhaps necessary to note some further differences. The experience is no mere imagination worked up into vividness. Nor is it a cultivated mode of contemplation on the lines prescribed by any specific religious dogma. We should also distinguish it from spiritual aspiration raised to its highest level of passionate longing.

If this is the nature of the experience from the subjective angle, there is something singularly marked in the objective aspect also.

The experience is regarded as bringing within the range of the consciousness of the perceiver, something ultimate, the *real* reality, as it were. The routine experience of the world may be an awareness of the fragments of Being and it may also contain an admixture of the apparent and the false ; but this experience is encountered with the whole or the infinite Reality, as such, without any shadow of illusion and uncertainty. It is utterly authentic and integrative.

Is this experience merely cognitive ? The mystics would hardly subscribe to that limitation. The experience is the ultimate good, as it marks the fullness of self-realization. It is a state of peace and joy. Here, we have the fulfilment of being for the perceiver. The volitional and emotional aspects of personality are mobilized and brought to final fructification in the rapture of a supreme vision. Thus the experience is both the supreme knowledge and the supreme joy. Such, in brief, is the nature of the experience, according to the claims of the mystics.

### III

From materialist point of view, mysticism has been assailed as mere hallucination. The dismissal of a whole area of experience to suit a particular pre-conceived theory is patently illogical. That some mystics have resorted to religion to find relief from the agony and frustration of their troubled lives is no proof of the pathological character of their experiences. There is the well-known dictum that the origin of an experience does not determine its validity. Further, we are entitled to ascribe an experience to pathological sources only after we are satisfied on independent grounds that it is incoherent in itself and contradicts established facts unimpeachably. In the terminology of Indian thought, only when there is '*bādha*' (contradiction), there is the logical necessity to consider the experience as originating from a *duṣta-kāraṇa*' (defective source).

The refutation of mysticism through a detection of biographical idiosyncrasies and instinctual privations of the mystics reverses the legitimate procedure of criticism. Rather, a philosophical or scientific refutation must precede the investigation into the possible pathological sources of the experience in question. Mysticism has brought richness, vitality and integration to the individual mystics and on purely pragmatic grounds it stands vindicated. These 'fruits' compel a favourable judgment. Bergson's argument that mysticism is a revolutionary force, breaking up closed societies and closed moralities and bringing about the open society and the open morality adds a powerful pragmatic support to its case, in terms of social good, apart from the values realized by the individual mystics themselves. It can be and has been argued that the standpoint of philosophy emanating from mysticism is the only one that renders a coherent view of Reality possible, and a negation of that standpoint would amount to holding that the world is an ultimate disorder and a meaningless chaos. That alternative would rob even materialism of its logical foundation. Orderliness of Reality is the basic presupposition of all thought and claim of truth. Whereas a complete examination of rejection of the mysticism in terms of abnormal psychology is neither to the point at this stage of our inquiry, nor it is possible. A prima-facie attitude does require at least this much of critical cognizance.

## IV

## The Historical Panorama of Indian Mysticism

The mystical outlook permeates the entire heritage of Indian religious history and philosophy. It is necessary to attempt a brief survey of it through the ages before analysing its principal types and characteristics. It would serve as a desirable background for a philosophical interpretation. The hymns of the *Ṛgveda* constitute the literary evidence we have concerning the earliest phase of Indian religion. It is true that the Vedic religion was largely sacrificial in character and was more or less a polytheistic nature-worship in its superficial aspect. But deeper currents of thought, transcending the apparent pluralism of the gods and affirming values other than the hedonistic rewards of sacrifice, are also quite discernible throughout. Even the sacrificial and polytheistic layer of the literature is susceptible of symbolic interpretation. But the clearly monotheistic and idealistic parts of the hymns contain magnificent intimations of mystic experience. The most venerated formula

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of Vedic prayer, *Savitṛ*, is addressed to the Supreme Deity for purposes of enlightenment. The famous *puruṣa-sukta* contains an emphatic affirmation of a direct vision of the Supreme Being. "I know this great *Puruṣa*, who is of the radiance of the sun, beyond darkness. He who knows Him, thus, becomes immortal here, and there is no other pathway to the goal." The declaration asserts a direct experience of the transcendent and luminous Reality and regards such direct knowledge the means for eternal life.

The *Brāhmaṇas* and the rest of the pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature continue to have similar records of mystical experience, though there is an overdoing of sacerdotal religion.

In the *Upaniṣads*, this higher trend attains maturity, as it were, and supersedes, once for all, all the other elements of the Vedic religion. The ultimate Reality for the *Upaniṣads* is one, the Infinite and it comes to be designated *Brahman*. The seers of the principal *Upaniṣads* praise the knowledge of *Brahman* and by knowledge they never understand sense-knowledge or mere logical understanding. In almost every *Upaniṣad*, there are ecstatic utterances recording immediate intuitions of *Brahman*. There is also the further intimation that the knowledge in question is the road to perfection. Just as *Brahman* is the central and absolute Reality, the knowledge of *Brahman* by way of experience, *darśana*, is asserted to be of the greatest value in life.

After the *Upaniṣads*, the next great document of Hinduism is the *Bhagavad Gītā*. It presents sustained argument for the realization of Divinity and it works out in detail the pathway to that realization. In its central six chapters, it sets forth the fundamentals of the way to the *Puruṣotthama* and also records a grand instance of the vision of the Supreme Being.

The epoch of the *Gītā* is succeeded by the emergence and development of the non-Vedic movements of Jainism and Buddhism. Though these movements reject the Vedic tradition, inclusive of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of *Brahman*, they do contain mystical elements. Jainism upholds the supremacy of *Kevala-Jñāna*, which supersedes all other forms of knowing and this supreme knowledge is described in mystical terms. It signifies a perfect apprehension of the eternal verities of Jainism, like the *Jīva* and *Ajīva* and the truths connected with salvation. In addition, Jainism concedes the possibility of many lower species of occult knowledge like *Avadhi* and *Manahparyāya*. That an atheistic school of thought sponsors mysticism should not be surprising. In Indian thought no necessary connection between the category of God and the admission of mystical experience as valid is posited. Jainism does provide for what may be described as soul-mysticism. The severance between theism and mysticism is more glaringly evident in Buddhism, which dispenses with the category of an enduring *ātman* also. The Buddha's awakening under the *bodhi*-tree is described in the language of mysticism. He intuited the greatest truths transcendentally. There was a leap on his part to the peak of vision, unshakeable and absolute. In the eightfold path, the last stage is named 'right *samādhi*' which is more than mere right *dṛṣṭi* or view and is particularly associated with yogic realization. In the later Buddhism, *Yogi-Pratyakṣa* is definitely admitted as a legitimate mode of knowledge. The ultra-critical Dharma-Kīrti acknowledges it as a *pramāṇa*. In the Mādhyamika System, the principle of the '*śūnya*' is held up as the theme of ineffable mystical realization. A whole school of Buddhism is named *Yogācāra*, thereby according recognition to *yoga*, evidently brought into integration with the fundamental principles of the particular Buddhistic School.

The subsequent period of Indian culture witnessed the progressive revival of the Vedic tradition. Popular Hinduism expressed itself through the *Purāṇas*, which promulgated the cult of devotion to the various gods, not overlooking the basic monotheistic background. It is in this period that the worship of Viṣṇu and Siva acquired great dominance. Along with this, occult religious tendencies, with appropriate ritualistic techniques and symbolisms evolved. The three schools of *Tantra*, *Saiva*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Sākta*, took form in this age.

These two religious trends, Purānic and Tāntric evolved within themselves corresponding types of mysticism. The *Puranic* Hinduism led to the *bhakti*-mysticism, and the Tantric Hinduism cultivated the esoteric mystery-cults, partly ritualistic and partly *yogic*. God-realization through devotion and the same end through esoteric worship techniques became the dominant objectives of Hinduism in this cultural epoch.

Philosophic thought, also acknowledging the authority of the *Vedas*, participated in this process of Hindu reconstruction. Several systems of philosophy within the broad framework of the orthodox (*āstika*) tradition came into existence and received distinct formulation.

*Sāṃkhya* is one of the most ancient schools of thought. In the oldest and most authoritative text of the system, the *Sāmkhyakārika* of Īśwara Kṛṣṇa, the main goal of spiritual discipline conceived as the discrimination between *Puruṣa* and *prakṛti* seems to have been considered a function of philosophical reason. But the work suprisingly enough, deals somewhat with what may be called lower mysticism consisting of *siddhis*. Thus the system does admit mysticism of a kind, though for the achievement of liberation it does advocate intellectual discrimination. The work of *sāṃkhya* reaches completion in the Yoga system of Patañjali. The latter system admits the existence of God and recognizes the value of devotion to Him for attaining *samādhi*. The *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali constitutes the foundational and authentic treatise on *Yoga*. The practice of *Yoga* culminates in the intuitive discernment of the *Puruṣa* as transcending *prakṛti*. The eightfold pathway of *Yoga* is systematically and authoritatively set forth in this work. The goal of *Yoga* called *samādhi* is mysticism, pure and simple. Whereas the *Yoga* metaphysics is *Sāṃkhya* with a slight amplification and an imperfectly developed theism superadded, its doctrine of the way of *Yoga* is its distinctive contribution. All schools of Indian philosophy are dependent on Patañjali for their description of the discipline leading to *samādhi*, the final spiritual illumination. The *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* system of thought accords recognition to mysticism in its epistemological admission of *yogi-pratyakṣa* as a *pramāṇa*. Only the *Pūrva-Mīmāmsā*, in its zealous advocacy of the authority of the *Vedas*, refuses to damage the supremacy of that authority by acknowledging private mysticisms.

While the *Yoga* system is an imperfect theism, the

*Yoga Pūrva-Mīṃāmsa* is an imperfect athesim. Both Kumārila and Prabhākara manage to dispense with the postulate of creation and, consequently, with the idea of a divine source of the universe. It is controversial whether Kumārila really and completely shook himself away from theism. An utterly mystifying thesis concerning the timeless existence and intrinsic authoritativeness of the *Veda*, particularly that part of it which inculcates the sacrificial religion gets propounded. The Vedic gods are divested of their importance ; transcendent and occult potencies are ascribed to the sacred deeds themselves. We may almost describe the *Mīmāṃsā* system as a verbal and sacrificial mysticism.

The advent of *Vedānta* brings in an era of triumphant expansion in Hindu thought. *Vedānta* sublimates the warring cults, both Purāṇic and Tāntrik. It effectively disables the heterodox systems of thought. It also supersedes, by a judicious process of assimilation and refutation, the other schools of orthodox thinking such as *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and *Pūrva-Mīmamsā*.

The *Brahma-Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa builds up the system of *Vedānta* by a process of co-ordination, substantiation and elucidation, working up the immense body of the insights contained in the *Upaniṣads* into an ordered whole. The entire mystical heritage of the *Upaniṣads* receives a comprehensive presentation. Though the work opens in the manner of dogmatic theology, declaring *Sāstra* as the *pramaṇa* for the knowledge of *Brahman*, it is in reality an interpretation and vindication of Upaniṣadic mysticism, for the *sastra* in this case consists of the inspired Upaniṣadic discourses traditionally named the *Vidyās*. The very word *Upaniṣad*, we may note incidentally, signifies the direct apprehension of the ultimate *Brahman*. The *sūtras* assert categorically and with all due emphasis that the transcendent *Brahman* is a matter of direct intuitive experience in '*samarādhana*' or meditative devotion. (3-2-22 and 3-2-23) The consolidation of the Hindu thought in the Vedāntic system ends the period of speculative uncertainty and confusion. It establishes once for all the philosophy of

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the *Upaniṣads* in a systematized form as the characteristic utterance of the spirit of Indian metaphysics and religious culture.

The system of *Vedānta* develops two contrasted and conspicuous tendencies in the subsequent period. The philosophical movement propogated by Śaṅkara champions a pure monistic version of *Vedānta*. It naturally appropriates mysticism into its fold and we have the practice and theory of mysticism in its monistic aspect. Mystic experience is construed as the direct experiential realization of the identity of the *Ātman* and *Brahman*. The *yoga* technique formulated by Patañjali is harnessed to the monistic realization aimed at. This contemplative mysticism, signifying the absorption of the individual self in the absolute non-dual spirit remains a lasting type of mysticism in the later Hinduism.

*Vedānta* receives a theistic and devotional formulation at the hands of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabha and this develops into a rival movement of thought. The primary inspiration of this movement is *bhakti* or the loving adoration of God. Naturally, mysticism is cultivated as a part of *bhaki* in which the element of worship and surrender occupies the central position. The *bhakti* cult develops into a mighty movement with many regional ramifications and permeates the entire country. The medieval Hinduism is dominated by this *bhakti*-mysticism. Conspicous branches of this phase of devotional mysticism are the Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism of the South, Maharāṣtra mysticism, the Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa cults of Gujarat and northern India and the powerful *Vaiṣṇava* movements of Bengal and Assam. Almost every language and region of the country developed great devotional literature and gave rise to great saints in amazing numbers, preaching the love of God. The mysticism of Jṇāneswara has the striking combination of monism and *Bhakti*, even as Kashmir Śaivism and *Vīra* Śaivism of Karnataka combine them. Barring these exceptions, the *bhakti* movement as a whole represents a theistic variety of mysticism, emphasizing love and surrender to God, conceived as transcending the individual spirit. It is as a powerful variation of this movement that the Sikh religion has to be viewed; it also assimilated some of the insights and principles of the Sūfi movement in Islam, owing to an identical affirmation on the part of Sufism of the supremacy of love in the approach to God.

We might almost say that the age of the *bhakti* mysticism continued right up to the present century. It obtained a powerful revival in the personality of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, who proclaimed the basic unity of all religions from the standpoint of ultimate realization. He insisted that the most vital factor in the religious life is the mystical realization of the Divine and he effected a fusion of the absorption-mysticism of *Advaita* with the love-mysticism of the theistic tradition.

Still more recently, we had the ethical mysticism of Mahatma Gandhi. Sri Aurobindo, with his great intellectual powers and vast scholarly attainments, pleaded powerfully for the recognition of the supra-mental approach to Reality, trying in his works to build up an 'integral' system of *yoga*.

Rabindranath Tagore re-lived the rich traditions of the past in a universal spirit and brought out in his immortal poetry a sublime aesthetic mysticism. Radhakrishnan is not himself a mystic but his is the boldest voice in favour of the intuitional approach to reality, strengthened by his mastery of the relevant philosophical traditions of both the East and the West. Such is a brief outline of the history of the mysticism.

## V

## TYPES OF HINDU MYSTICISM

We have surveyed briefly the long and fairly uninterrupted history of the mystical movement in Hinduism. There was never any period when this inward experiential life of religion was supressed or persecuted in Hinduism. On the contrary, it was actually advocated by every creed, popular as well as learned. The perception of reality by every practitioner of religion for himself was always regarded as the correct and ideal practice of religion. At the same time, it is to be noted as a remarkable phenomenon of culture that no religious sect or philosophical school claimed infallibility on the ground of its

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mysticism. Claims to superiority were always on advanced rational or dialectical grounds. In short, we are confronted with the paradoxical situation that mysticism is universally exalted, but not invested with authority to overrule the dictates of reason. Hinduism, therefore, enjoys the grace of ecstasy without overthrowing sanity.

The relation of the authority of the sacred books to personal experience is also soundly conceived. The sacred texts themselves lay down the duty of achieving personal experience in order to complete their own import. Hinduism never underwent the ordeal of facing contradiction between the 'Religion of Authority' and the 'Religion of Spirit'. Analogously the ethical values governing individual life and social activity were emphasized by every mystical tradition as indispensable preconditions of spiritual progress. The *Upaniṣads* themselves declare in unmistakable terms the utter necessity of moral preparation in one's march to spiritual experience. Thus, Hinduism was spared the crisis of conflict between mysticism on the one hand, and reason, scriptural revelation and the demands of moral life on the other. These general observations form a fitting prelude to a fuller discussion of Hindu mysticism.

There are three distinct types of mysticism in the Hindu tradition. It is necessary to note their distinctive characteristics and form an accurate conception of the plan of spiritual life envisaged in each of these mystic traditions.

(a) The mystic way promulgated by the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali constitutes one principal type. It may be conveniently designated soul-mysticism. The Yoga system conceives of the universe as consisting of a plurality of *puruṣas* and the physical universe. God is posited but His role, both in the cosmological and axiological fields, is not dominant. The *puruṣa* is enmeshed in the world of matter and this constitutes bondage. Extrication of the *puruṣa* from *prakṛti* constitutes spiritual liberation and for working out that consummation, an eightfold path is formulated. The goal of *Yoga* is the release of spirit from matter. What has effected the undesirable involvement is the error on the part of the *puruṣa* that he is one with *prakṛti*. Therefore the ultimate means of release is the removal of that error by a process of discrimination. It is not enough to have rational or intellectual discrimination. The intellectual discrimination must mature into an experiential realization of the utter distinctness of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti.* This end is accomplished by following the eightfold path. The first stage of the path consists of restraints of a moral character. They are truthfulness, non-violence, non-stealing, self-control and non-covetousness. The second phase consists of observances such as austerity, purity, contentment, study of scriptures and devotion to God. These observances constitute individual self-culture. The two next elements of the programme consist of a suitable training of the body and breath. The influence of the body on the mind is clearly recognized in this prescription. The fifth step consists of the withdrawal of the senses and the mind from the pursuit of sensual pleasures. It signifies the gathering up of the energies of personality inwards for purposes of directing them towards the achievement of inward illumination. These five limbs of *yoga* are comparatively external. The sixth step consists of fixing the mind on some specific object. The seventh consists of continued meditation on the object. The eighth is not so much a step as the very destination. It is *samādhi* or perfect inward realization of the transcendent nature of the *puruṣa* or self. The perfection of meditation issues in the certitude of immediate insight. The mind that is instrumental in realization, rather the very seat of realization, is a part, though a sublime part, of the equipment for life in bondage and when the *samādhi* emancipates the soul from nature, it naturally liquidates the mind also. The nature of the *puruṣa* in this state can be described as the supra-mental consciousness.

It has often been argued that all the mystics at the highest point of their ecstatic vision, whatever the differences of the starting point, come to an identical type of experience as embodied in their utterances; and this unanimity is suggested to be a proof of the objective validity of the experience. However the position is not so simple as could be discovered in the study of the Hindu mysticism itself.

(b) The second major type of Indian mysticism is what

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may be described as Indentity-mysticism. Its principal exemplification is to be found in *Advaita Vedānta*. For this system, the ultimate Reality is a single infinite principle of the nature of spirit or consciousness. The physical world of matter or non-spirit has only phenomenal reality. The individual self is one in its fundamental essence with the absolute spirit and its separateness and plurality share the phenomenal character of external reality. Human bondage consists in the illusion of the difference between *Brahman* and *Ātman*—the Universal Spirit and the individual self—and the illusion of the reality of the external world. When this twofold error is removed by the knowledge that *Brahman* and the *Atman* are one, bondage comes to an end and the resulting state is *mokṣa* or freedom. Such freedom is the ultimate goal of life.

The liberating knowledge can arise only in a mind fit for it by virtue of its purity. The purity required has to be attained through a process of moral self-culture which is brought out clearly in the teachings of the *Gītā*. In the mind, thus purified, a fourfold equipment necessary for gaining higher knowledge must be cultivated. A discriminating sense of values, pertaining to the eternal goal of man and the ephemeral trivialities of mundane pleasures is a necessity. This has to lead to the cultivation of virtues like the control of the senses, control of the mind, detachment, tranquil endurance of the dualities of life and reflectiveness on the one hand and a total renunciation of sensate values on the other. Such a sublimation of inner man issues in a yearning for the ultimate ideal of liberation.

The liberation sought for is attainable only through enlightenment, for bondage is entirely due to error—the illusion of dualism. The first state of enlightenment consists in the acquisition of knowledge concerning the ultimate Reality through a study of Vedantic scriptures under the direction of enlightened preceptors. This has to be followed by a process of philosophical reflection on what has been learnt. When the reflection produces conviction in the truth of what the scriptures impart, one has an intellectual knowledge of the non-dual *Brahman*. But this knowledge has to be transformed into direct experience. For that purpose, continuous contemplation on the theme presented by the scriptures and philosophically established by reason is to be practised. In this stage of contemplation, the yogic eightfold path gets assimilated in the Advaitic Theory of *Sādhana*. The completion of this process brings about the immediate intuitive experience of the non-dual *Brahman*. This experience may be construed as the culmination of contemplation or as the fullness of the understanding of the Vedantic texts themselves, such as 'I am Brahman', with the obstacles to such understanding annihilated by reflection and contemplation. When the integral and immediate realization of the identity of the *Ātman* with *Brahman*—the sole Reality—arises, perfect spiritual emancipation is achieved. It is freedom in this very life. Śaṅkara in a noted passage in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* seems to be hinting that 'freedom-in-life' is a fact of personal experience to him. (Bhāṣya ıv-1-15.) This is identity-mysticism in its barest outline.

(c) It is difficult to name precisely the third major type of mysticism for unlike the two varieties considered above, it is not confined to the philosophical sphere of Hinduism, but is part of the popular religious culture of the masses as well. It may be broadly characterized as theistic mysticism. It has grown up within each sectarian cult, such as Vaisnavism Saivism and Saktism. It is the dominant element in the puranic Hinduism and permeates the non-esoteric aspect of *Tantra*. In the post-Saṇkara movement of the *Bhakti* cult, it constitutes the goal of many a great saint. At the purely learned and philosophical level, it gets affirmed in emphatic terms in the philosophic systems of *Saiva Siddhānta* and Madhva's version of *Vedānta* (Dvaita). In spite of this breadth, and the presence of the learned and the popular divisions in it, the essential features are capable of formulation in fairly clear terms. The foremost creed is the conception of God as the supreme personality transcending the individual self. The dualism between the Divine Self and the finite individual is an eternal veriety. God abounds in infinite perfections and is wholly free from evil of all types. The individuals are also eternal and superphysical but their very being and all that they may achieve in this spiritual career is dependent on God. The physical part

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of the universe is no phenomenal appearance but is genuinely real, rooted in God and forming an aspect of His glory. God, finite souls and matter are the three irreducible realities and among them God is the self-determining and all-sustaining power, in which the other two realities live, move and have their being. God is transcendent by virtue of his perfection, and is immanent in the exercise of his infinite cosmic control. Deism never figured as a plausible alternative in Indian thought.

These metaphysical tenets naturally lead to the theistic idea of the goal of life. The vision of God with all his metaphysical and moral grandeur is the ultimate perfection for man and the absence of this blissful communion with the Supreme Being is the essence of bondage. This communion is to be achieved through an intense love of God. God fosters freedom on the part of the finite self and, hence, human initiative by way of love is an indispensable pre-requisite. When this condition is fulfilled, the Divine grace gets actualized and the vision of God is vouchsafed to the yearning devotee. The love in question is no blind emotion but an enlightened aspiration founded on a definite knowledge of the boundless majesty of God. This knowledge has to be acquired through all the resources open to man. The study of the scriptures and the philosophical understanding based on them would also come into the plan at this stage. This intellectual effort for being steady and fruitful does require the moral health of personality. Hence the ethical preparation is vital for the Godward progress of the soul. This way of love emerging from knowledge and rendered possible by the ethical elevation of character is the ground of *bhakti*. The conception of God as transcending the individual self, the all-important role of *bhakti* and the ascription of the final redemption to the efficacy of the Divine grace are the cardinal points in this type of mystical philosophy.

## IV

## THE MYSTICISM OF THE GITA

There are undoubtedly mixed types of mysticism apart from these distinct and fundamental types. The plurality of mystical types undermines one of the persistent claims that mystics speak a common language, as it were, and their affirmations are identical in spite of their cultural and religious variations. Now the question is whether there is any significant movement of the mystical spirit which harmoniously blends these types and brings about a natural integration within the sphere of mysticism. If it could produce the impression from the level of experience as well as from that of the philosophly behind it, that the separation of these types represents a situation incidental to imperfect development, the cause of mysticism would be magnificently served. It is the contention of this article that there is such a mystical movement in Hinduism. The *Gītā*, interpreted without the distorting medium of partisan commentaries, seems to present the gospel of such a comprehensive mysticism.

It takes up in its early parts, particularly in the fifth and sixth chapters, the ideal of self-realization somewhat analogous to the ideal of Patañjali. But it hastens to add that of all the *yogis*, the one who is devoted to God is the best. In other words, soul-mysticism is converted into a preparatory discipline leading to the mysticism of love. The logic of the position is quite comprehensible. Self-knowledge at its best is the sure foundation for the love of God, for it is a perfectly self-knowing individual who can discern his ultimate good in the adoration of the Supreme Being. When the self is obscured and its essential being is covered up by a false perspective of itself, it does not comprehend its essential nature which consists in the love of the highest and best. Adoration of the Divine is the basic nature of *Jīvātman* (individual self) and the realization of this intrinsic fact through experiential self-understanding is naturally the best preparation for *bhakti*.

The identity-mysticism has a fundamental point in its support. The finite self does not simply 'encounter' the Supreme Being as another being. If the latter is really infinite and supreme, the finite must intuit itself as comprehended within the object of mystic vision. This merger is not an event in the experience, but is an eternal fact. The soul of the mystic must 'belong' in a timeless manner to the principle approached in the experience. The *Gītā* makes this position abundantly clear in its characterization of the entire universe as the *vibhūti* of God and the individual self as an *aṃsa* or eternal portion of the infinite Reality. The mystic experience is no confrontation of one finite self with another finite self. It is a vision of the Supreme Being as containing within itself the subject of the vision, as a factor in the life of God Himself.

Theistic mysticism is sound in its refusal to minimize the transcendence of God and cancel the individuality of the mystic's self. The *Gītā* accords the fullest recognition to the transcendence of God in the fifteenth chapter and nowhere countenances the final disappearance of individuality. The union with God is a fulfilment and enrichment of the loving soul of the devotee and not its dissolution. The language of fellowship with the all encompassing presence is repeatedly used in the *Gītā*. The fourteenth chapter specifically declares that the perfected devotee acquires qualitative approximation to God and not numerical identity with Him. Even the very last verse declares the co-presence of the Divine Spirit and the individual soul in attunement, as productive of the greatest glory.

The *Gītā* thus puts together in the ample framework of its mysticism the cardinal principles of identity-mysticism and theistic mysticism, not in the manner of eclectic juxtaposition but as vital aspects of an integral life in God. The self's perception of itself-in-God as a part of its perception of God, without nullyfying the transcendent majesty of God, and also without reducing the personality of the self into a passing fiction are the characteristics of the mystic experience as presented in the *Gītā*.

The nature of the pathway to this culminating experience is also comprehensively conceived. The factor of *Jñāna* exclusively emphasized in the identity-mysticism, and the principle of *bhakti* exalted in theism are fused into one single *sādhana* in the *Gītā*. The highest type of *bhakti* is that which issues from knowledge. The seventh chapter sets down this valuation. *Bhakti* is the inevitable outcome of supreme knowledge which finds its fulfilment therein. The conventional contrast between *jñāna* and *bhakti* sounds incredible in the atmosphere of the *rāja-vidya* that the *Gītā* creates. At every stage of spiritual evolution, *bhakti* is assigned a determining role. *Karma-yoga* includes it and self-knowledge needs its perfecting contribution. The knowledge, and perception of and integration with God are incapable of realization through any other means than *bhakti*. The *sthita-prājñā* conquers sensuality through *bhakti* and the binding effects of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* are destroyed through *bhakti*. No wonder some commentators regard *bhakti* as the central teaching of the *Gītā*. But the *Gītā* is unambiguous in its doctrine that *bhakti* issuing from *jñāna* is the highest and that supreme *bhakti* issues in an intimate knowledge of God. This fusion of contemplative mysticism with *bhakti* mysticism is one of the unique achievements of the *Gītā*. The combination works out a double elevation. The *bhakti* rises to the highest level through its inclusion of knowledge, as its basic ingredient ; the *Jñāni* progresses to the direct vision of his Divine object (*darśana*) through the instrumentality of *bhakti* and attains even integration (*pravesa*) with his Deity. The conclusion of crucial eleventh chapter lays down this most significant proposition and the concluding part of the eighteenth chapter reiterates it.*

The *Gītā* is often extolled as the heart of the spiritual tradition of Hinduism and receives homage from practically every sect and philosophical system of living Hinduism ; and yet sufficient effort has not been made to determine with exactitude its major contributions. This is due perhaps to the absence of any challenge calling for the justification of claims on its behalf. When its specific contributions are to be enumerated, its synthetic and comprehensive formulation of the nature of mysticism must receive its due recognition.

To complete the statement of the essentials of mysticism as presented in the *Gītā*, it is necessary to do justice to another teaching of the text.

The *Gītā* abounds in declarations of the importance of surrender so much that we may almost name the work as promulgating 'surrender-mysticism'. But the other elements such as

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*"'By unswerving devotion to Me, O Arjuna, I can thus be known, truly seen and entered in to, O oppressor of the foe (Arjuna)"—Gītā xi. 54 "Through devotion he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in truth ; then having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters in to Me"—Gītā xviii. 55

*karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* also receive full attention ; therefore it would not be fair to simplify its teaching as advocating the way of surrender to the Supreme Being in any exclusive sense. So only after giving due recognition to the comprehensiveness of its direction, its high valuation of surrender to the Divine Spirit must be appreciated. The philosophical discourse in the *Gītā* starts with the surrender of Arjuna to Lord Kṛṣṇa for the purpose of enlightenment. The last words of the teacher exhort Arjuna to take refuge in God for redemption from sin and sorrow. In the intervening progress of the discourse in every crucial context, the remedy of self-surrender is prescribed. *Māyā*, which envelops all creation, could be overcome only through self-surrender. The cosmic form of God is revealed to Arjuna as he humbly prays for it in a spirit of utter surrender. Overwhelmed by the vision, he does nothing but repeatedly offer his obeisance, which symbolizes the inward sense of surrender. The fifteenth chapter makes the teacher enunciate that the way out of *saṃsāra* consists in total self-surrender. The core of the entire teaching is summed up in the eighteenth chapter.* The culminating message is put in the magnificent last verse of the teaching which condenses within itself the entire gospel of surrender. There is a very important sense in which the surrender-mysticism contains within itself all the other types. All of them seem to converge on it and the *Gītā* may be interpreted as bringing all of them harmoniously to fructification in this key-type.

The soul-mysticism may be considered the experiential perception of the self as 'belonging' in a metaphysical sense to the supreme Reality. Moral life consisting of *karma-yoga* surely requires a fundamental pre-supposition, the attitude of dedication to God. The contemplative mysticism as an experience of the absolute Reality involves the merger of the subject of experience in the object as an element or member in it. The realization of this self-merger is the cardinal point of the identity-mysticism.

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*"The Lord abides in the heart of all beings O Arjuna, causing them
to turn round by His power as if they were mounted on a machine.
Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharatha.
By his grace shall thou attain supreme peace and eternal abode"
—*Gītā* xviii. 61-62

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The theistic *bhakti-mysticism* is no simple love, it is rather adoration. The essence of worship is to be object-centred and the worshipper offers his very self and all that belongs to him for the glorification of the object of his devotion. It is *Ātmanivedana*.

In all experience of mysticism, there is an element of passivity and the intiative for effectuating the communion is attributed to the Divine object. Naturally, the surrender of the anguish of responsibility and the burden of taking the intiative is a fitting predisposition for the communion longed for. This abnegation of effort owing to the transfer of responsibility and initiative to the object of devotion is the heart of the attitude of *prapatti*. Therefore the *Bhagavad-Gītā* seems to do well in according to surrender all the prevading importance it actually does. Thereby, it brings together and perfects all the several types of mysticism. We may conclude with a fair measure of confidence that the *Gītā* embodies Hindu mysticism at its best.

## V

# MODERN HINDU MOVEMENTS

Dr K. L. Seshagiri Rao

Following the Turkish (A.D. 1300-1400) and Mughal invasions (A.D. 1400-1750) the Hindu Community became increasingly defensive. It held on to every external ritual and every historical accretion as if they were the very essence of religion. The Hindu social system became rigid and stagnant. Ignorant and selfish priests became dominant and had commercialized religion; they fed the population on antiquated rituals and obsolete customs. The advent of the British (A.D. 1754-1850) saw the Hindu community in one of the darkest periods in the history.

The British conquest of India brought about a cultural confrontation between the East and the West; the vigorous Western civilization challenged the presuppositions and values of the Hindu culture in almost every walk of life—social, cultural and religious. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "The impact of Western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society, of a modern consciousness on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which, however, sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations" (*Discovery of India*, p. 290). The Christian missionaries were shocked by such customs as polygamy, child-marriages, the burning of widows, the harsh caste-system and the cruel practice of untouchability. They believed that the dynamic qualities of their religion and culture would shake the roots of the ancient Hindu philosophy. In 1837, Frederick Store felt that Christian influence would become so great that Hinduism would eventually be eradicated : "I believe there is a very general

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feeling among the people that some great crisis is at hand in their religious policy; and the common belief is that Hinduism will be supplanted by Christianity." (See G.S. Banahatti, *The Quintessence of Vivekananda*)

The impact of such a cultural encounter, however, produced results which rather surprised the Western critics of Hinduism. Enlightened Hindu leaders spot-lighted the shortcomings and evils that had crept into Hinduism and aimed at a transformation of the Hindu society. They came forward to change the deplorable religious conditions of their community. However, they reaffirmed the inherent worth of the Hindu tradition and sought to offer a pure understanding of Hinduism. They endeavoured to place before the Hindu the principles and practices of 'ancient Hinduism', and sought to reconstruct Hindu social life accordingly.

During 1850-1950, Hinduism found itself; and the Hindu society passed through an age of reformation. The self-discovery of Hinduism expressed itself in a number of movements. These movements emerged spontaneously in different parts of the country and brought about a radical reorientation of Hinduism, the effects of which are resounding in the Hindu community even today. Among these, we shall discuss here the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society, the Rama-Krishna Mission and the Sarvodaya movements.

The establishment of Brahma Samaj in August 1828 by Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) constitutes a landmark in the Hindu religious history. It was the first reaction to the Western attacks on Hinduism. Rammohan believed that Hinduism had to be reformed if it had to withstand these external attacks and survive internal decay. Through the Samaj, he attempted to inject new life into the traditional Hinduism.

Rammohan did not blindly accept the ritualistic and irrational practices and customs followed by his family or taught by the priests. He felt that the blind acceptance of anything on the sheer weight of 'traditionality' was a mistake. He believed that the worthiness of a tradition should be based on its spiritual and social values. He, therefore, sought to examine religious beliefs and practices on a rational basis. His major concern, however, was not to undermine the Hindu faith but to give it a new meaning by pruning the dead and parasitic limbs from the living tree of the Hindu tradition.

Rammohan studied Hindu scriptures extensively. He also learnt Persian and Arabic. He read Qur'an and became intimately familiar with the Islamic tradition. He studied the Bible too and acquainted himself with the Christian tradition. He saw in each certain intrinsic and basic similarities, and a common spiritual core. According to him, that core was the 'unity', personality and spirituality of God. His study of different religions strengthened his predisposition towards monotheism. When the house of Brahma Samaj was built, he dedicated it to the worship of One God. He held that 'theism' is one and that there were three historical versions of it, *viz.* Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. He accepted all religions as legitimate. He was, in fact, one of the pioneers of the study of Comparative Religion.

Rammohan devoted his life to the improvement of the socio-religious conditions of his countrymen. He believed that love of God ought to find its expression in the service of mankind. Since all social matters had religious overtones in the Hindu tradition, it was only natural that any reform in it should have resulted in social changes. Rammohan denounced child-marriage. He worked courageously for the abolition of *sati*—the practice of immolating widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands and for the emancipation of women in general. He favoured widow-remarriage and worked for the outlawing of polygamy. He discounted the efficacy of image-worship. He aimed at the promotion of a pious, ethical life—a life of charity, morality and harmony among men of all creeds.

Rammohan's services to the cause of education need special mention. He fully realized the need in India for liberal education. He also realized that this instruction must embrace advancements both in science and technology. He made it clear, however, that Western education need not turn Indians into Christians. In this sense, Rammohan's work proved to be a set-back to Christian missionaries in their proselytizing activities; and the Hindu intellectuals began to take pride in their own heritage.

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Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) was the next outstanding figure in the movement of Brahma Samaj. His father Dwarakanath Tagore was one of the collaborators of Rammohan Roy in the establishment of Brahma Samaj. Devendranath had a great admiration for Rammohan. He, along with other Bengali intellectuals, aimed at balancing the onesided emphasis on Western education. He attacked the blind imitation of the West. He opened schools for teaching Indian as well as Western ideas. He stressed the cultivation of Sanskrit and Vedic lore. He attempted to spread Vedanta "free from the blind worship of the idols." He doubted the efficacy of rites and ceremonies. And yet he sought to be faithful to all that was genuine in the ancient Hindu tradition out of which he recovered a thorough monotheistic faith.

Devendranath awakened the Hindu society to the 'danger of the invasion of Christianity.' He discussed with his friends ways and means of protecting the Hindus and their tradition and started a school for 'Hindu welfare'. He encouraged the Hindus to take initiative in social reform and participate in public activities. He wanted his countrymen to follow what Rammohan advocated. He worked incessantly for the emancipation and education of women for which he made efforts to establish schools for girls. He also aimed at preventing widow-remarriage, drinking, child-marriage and polygamy.

Devendranath Tagore developed a ceremony of initiation in the Samaj; he along with some other members went through it. Some members, however, wanted to completely rationalize the doctrines of the Samaj. But Devendranath was against that kind of 'intellectual assessment of spiritual values.' Consequently, his rationalist friends, led by Akshay Kumar Dutt, broke away from the Samaj and started the 'Friends' Society', they wanted to develop the Samaj on the lines of positivism and humanism of Comte and Spencer.

Keshubchandra Sen (1838-1884) gave a new turn to the Brahma Samaj. He was educated in a Hindu college. He studied Western philosophy and sociology and was drawn into the liberal movement of his times. He gave up idolatry and felt a longing for something higher and deeper.

When he read a publication of Brahma Samaj in 1857, he found that his own convictions were reflected in it. He joined the Samaj as an enthusiastic worker, and soon became its secretary. He started a forum for philosophical and theological discussions on Brahmo theism. In 1860, he also started a *Sangat Sabha*; he required from all the members of the *Sabha* the abandonment of caste and the sacred thread. He prohibited idolatry and condemned the dancing of public women in the temples.

Keshubchandra Sen was a talented leader and an outstanding orator. He organized a body of devoted workers. He gave up his job and devoted his full time to the work of the Samaj. He tried to carry the message of the Samaj to every corner of the country. He undertook extensive lecture-tours to expand the Samaj into an all-India movement. He started the *Indian Mirror,* first as a fortnightly paper in English, then as a weekly and finally as a daily paper. He started another paper in Bengali, named *Tattvabodhini Patrica*. Realizing that a better system of education was the crying need of the times, he started the Calcutta College in 1862. For the education of women, he launched a women's magazine called *Brahma Bodhini*, and started Brahmika Samaj—a prayer meeting exclusively for women.

Keshub delivered a lecture in 1886 entitled 'Jesus Christ, Asia and Europe'. In that he gave a universal interpretation of Christ and paid his homage to the 'Carpenter of Nazareth'. This lecture evoked severe criticism from Christian missionaries who thought that he was misinterpreting Christianity. Orthodox Hindus were equally furious ; they said, 'Keshub is embracing Christianity'. The resultant controversy had a disruptive influence on the Samaj. Besides, the young members were attempting to introduce drastic and radical changes into the Samaj in spite of the caution given by Devendranath Tagore; the gulf between the old generation and the new generation widened so much that they could not remain together. Keshub, along with his young workers, separated and established the *Brahma Samaj of India* in 1866.

The membership of the *Brahma Samaj of India* was thrown open to all men and women of every race and country. Keshub

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declared : "Our cathedral is the universe, our object of worship is the Supreme Lord, our scripture is intuitive knowledge, our path to salvation is worship, our atonement is self-purification. Our guides and leaders are all the good and great men. In this catholic Brahmo faith, there is no trace of sectarianism, no cause of dissension. It is the property of all ; hence it is not a sectarian body. It belongs to all who, as the true worshippers of one true God, will love Him and do the work He loves." The scriptures of Brahma Samaj of India included selections not only from the Vedas but also from the Bible, Qur'ān, Zendavesta and so on. Even the architecture of the 'Bharatavarshiya Brahma Mandir' was a harmonious blend of the Hindu, Gothic and Buddhist styles.

Keshub ran into serious difficulty in 1878 in connection with the marriage of his daughter with the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Both the bride and the bridegroom were below marriageable age (*i.e.* 14 and 18 respectively), according to the Marriage Act of 1872. This Act had been framed by Keshub and passed with his help. Keshub gave his consent to the marriage of his daughter. To add to this, the marriage was performed according to the Hindu rituals (as per the wishes of the bridegroom's party). All these things infuriated the Brahmas of the old school as well as of the new school. Many of his friends and collaborators left him. He was disowned by his friends and subjected to persecution. This resulted in another schism, leading to the formation of the *Sadharana Brahma Samaj* under the leadership of Anand Mohan Basu.

Keshub's break with Devendranath Tagore, the opposition of Hindu orthodoxy and the differences of his own companions distressed him very much. His mind's sorrow led him to pray daily and intensely. A new phase in the life of Keshub and in the movement of Brahma Samaj began when he called his church *The Church of New Dispensation.* A significant event at that stage was the meeting of Keshub with Ramakrishna. Under the latter's influence, Keshub not only admitted the existence of Brahman, but also the 'power of Brahman' which Ramakrishna called the 'Mother'. With reference to 'idolatry' also, Keshub was persuaded to appreciate the need of

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the human mind for concrete symbols. Consequently, the custom of addressing God as 'Mother' was introduced in the 'Church of New Dispensation'. *Arti*, liturgical worship and *homa*, Vedic offering were introduced. Keshub began to teach that the worship of divinity in a variety of forms enriched monotheism and endeavoured to explain the ideas that underlay each Hindu god.

The scriptures of his Church included selections not only from the Hindu texts but also from the Bible, Qur'ān, Zendavesta and so on. In the service of his Church, he used choice extracts from the teachings of different religions. The emblem of his church was made of the cross, the crescent, the trident and the Vedic Om. He held that the promotion of harmony of religions was the real mission of Brahma Samaj. Keshub began as a disciple of the Christ, then became a Brahmo and ended up as a universalist.

The Brahma Samaj movement, from the very inception, represented the endeavours of the English educated Indians. The actual membership of the Samaj was never large, but its influence in social and religious reform has been tremendous. It had vast influence on every major religious current which evolved in India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Under the impact of the Samaj, obsolete religious practices were given up and the social-reconstruction activities were undertaken. The Samaj gave impetus to the resurgent spirit of Hinduism and arrested conversions by the Christian missionaries. The Brahma Samaj provided political leaders to the country at that time and gave a boost to Indian nationalism. Sectarian fragmentation, however, enfeebled the Samaj which was gradually absorbed in the main stream of Hinduism.

## THE ARYA SAMAJ

While Rammohan Roy used his understanding of Western tradition and Islamic culture to revalue and reform the Hindu tradition, another movement began under the leadership of Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) which violently reacted to all foreign influences. The Arya Samaj is one of the most important and thoroughly indigeneous religious reform movements in modern India.

Dayanand was born of orthodox Hindu parents in Morvi in Kathiawar. His education was strictly Hindu in nature. He was invested with the sacred thread when he was eight and he began his study of the *Vedas* and performance of daily worship.

Three incidents in his early life had profound influence on his later life. Once while observing the holy fast of *Sivaratri*, he saw a mouse eating the offerings dedicated to God. Dayanand wondered how an insignificant mouse could do such sacrilege to wards God who is omnipotent. Disillusioned by image-worship, he broke the fast. Nevertheless, he continued his Vedic studies within the guidelines of a traditional education. The next important incident of his life was encounter with deaths in his family—deaths of a sister and an uncle, both of whom were very close to him. Those deaths sent Dayanand into a period of deep reflection over the problem and meaning of life. The third notable incident in his early life was his flight from home and familiy for avoiding marriage that his father had prearranged for him. The impact of these incidents made itself felt in his later years. He displayed an open contempt of idolatry, made a determined effort to seek salvation and rejected everything (even family and marriage) that interfered with his supreme purpose.

Following his escape from home, Dayanand spent some time as a *brahmachari* (a religious student) ; after the lapse of some time, he got initiated into the forth stage, i.e. of a *sannyasi* (ascetic). It was at that time that he was given the name of Swami Dayanand Saraswati by which he is popularly known. Henceforth he led a life of complete renunciation and dedication to service of mankind.

The public ministry of Swami Dayanand started with an exhortation from his teacher : "I want thee to go forth into the world and spread enlightenment among mankind." Dayanand undertook to devote his life to the dissemination of Vedic knowledge and to fight relentlessly against the falsehood and

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corruption that had crept into Hinduism. He undertook preaching tours throughout the length and breadth of India; he participated in public discussions; and put forth enormous literary work. In 1875, Dayanand established the Arya Samaj on being confronted by the problem:

> . . . . how to reform Indian religion, how to effect a synthesis of the East and the West in such a way as to guarantee the intellectual and spiritual supremacy of the Indian people, do full justice to the attainments of other nations and to provide a universal-programme of religion.

Dayanand discovered the solution of the problem in accepting the Vedas as the revealed word of God. He asserted that the Vedas are the true source of all knowledge and religion. He maintained that the truth of the Hindu religion could be revealed only by a return to the Vedas. In them was to be found the purest and the oldest religion of mankind. Vedic Hinduism could help bring about the highest development of society realizable by man. The Arya Samaj recalled India to her Vedic tradition and to the mission of spreading the saving knowledge offered by the Vedas to all mankind. The method by which that objective was to be accomplished was through the founding of one chapter of Arya Samaj in every country of the world with further chapters subordinate to them. This organisation was to become an International Aryan League. Also colleges were to be established whose purpose was to teach the truth of the Vedas; that was the origin of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic colleges and the Gurukula colleges.

Dayanand rejected idolatry, the *avataras* of Vishnu and the miracles. He saw no conflict between religion and science. He expounded the Vedas in terms of pure and exalted monotheism. Dayanand considered the Vedas to be devoid of the 'misconceptions' that exist in the popular Hindu beliefs. He claimed that the many gods of the *Ṛg Veda* were really diverse names for the one eternal God. He rejected the 'absurdities' of the *Smṛitis* and the *Purāṇas*. He vigorously fought against the caste-system and worked enthusiastically for educational, social and political reforms.

Dayanand sought to convert apostate Hindus back to Hinduism. Since apostates were supposed to be ritually unclean, he instituted the 'suddhi' ceremony wherby they were officially reinstated in Hindu brotherhood. The right to undergo 'suddhi' was extended to the untouchables, 'a highly unorthodox and innovative measure' (*Zaehner*, p. 159).

The continuous polemics carried on by the Samaj against the Christian and Muslim missionary activities created a good deal of animosity and antipathy towards the Samaj. When India was partitioned, Arya Samaj lost a great deal of its property to Pakistan and many of its devoted workers were slain. Since then their influence is considerably reduced although they still carry on their educational, missionary and philanthropic work, most notably in the Punjab.

The Arya Samaj stands as a dynamic affirmation of the worth of Vedic ideals in the Hindu heritage. It appeals to all the Hindus, regardless of caste, and its teachings could be understood by all the Hindus and not merely by the intelligentsia. It taught infallibility of Vedas, strict monotheism and a return to purified *sanātana dharma*. The Samaj condemns 'idolatry, animal sacrifices, ancestor-worship, pilgrimages, priestcraft, offerings in temples, the caste-system, untouchability and child-marriages' due to their lacking any foundation in the Vedas (*Zaehner*. 159).

## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

A Russian Lady, Madam H.P. Blavatsky and American army man Col. H.S. Olcott started the Theosophical Society first in New York and later established it in India. They taught a universal religion whose roots were found in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. They popularized in Europe and America a number of oriental books of quality like the *Bhagvad-Gītā*, *Upaniṣads*, *Dhammapāda*, and so on. They called the attention of the people of the West to the Eastern faiths and evoked their interest in them.

Theosophy sees human religiousness as one basic tie binding all human beings together and man as a fragment of the Divine. It holds that the Divine reveals Itself in the cosmic process and that the universe is a process of unfoldment of its potentialities. It also maintains that religion is the perpetual quest of the human spirit for the Divine and that the different religions are merely the several methods adopted in that search. It finds similarities in the essentials of different religions. It believes that each religion originates from prophets and sages whom it calls 'adapts of spirituality'; they are supposed to constitute a brotherhood of mystics.

Theosophy does not announce any dogma or set of dogmas. It does not demand subscription to any one creed from its followers. It does not attempt to convert individuals. It attempts to demonstrate the truths of all religions. It maintains that it is a synthesis of all religions. It goes a step farther and affirms that it is a synthesis of science, philosophy and religion.

Mrs Annie Besant (1847-1933), a great champion of theosophy, believed that Hinduism alone could be the source of inspiration and national regeneration of India; she saw it as a powerful unifying force ever at work and holding the nation together. She believed that the revival of Hinduism was a national necessity and found its philosophy vigorous, peace-loving and charitable. She stood for a revival of the entire edifice of Hinduism. She emphasized the conceptions of *karma* and rebirth and of *devas* and *avatāras.*

She was equally critical of some of the obscurantist practices of the Hindu society and suggested reforms based on a synthesis of the values of the East and the West. She deprecated a blind imitation of the West; she insisted that new adoptions should not lose sight of the past traditions of the country.

She had a great enthusiasm for the upliftment of India. She deprecated the absence of co-operation between two sexes in Indian public life. She pointed out that education ought not to be the monopoly of men. She worked for the uplift of the depressed classes and for the establishment of an Indian ideal of education. In 1898 Besant founded the Central Hindu College at Benaras and in 1915 the Indian Home-Rule League. She always aimed for freedom and unity of the Indians and for the ancient Hindu ideals.

Theosophy gave a tremendous impetus to the spirit of Hindu renaissance. It inspired a spirit of pride and hope among Indians. It brought about a change of attitude in the English-educated youth—from contempt and scepticism to one of love and enthusiasm towards their religion. It helped to create a national spirit throughout the country. It vigorously defended the Hindu tradition, Hindu faith and practices. It helped the reclamation of Hindus who had forsaken Hinduism.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) of Bengal, became an important religious figure. Unlike the 'Liberal movement' which sprang from the Western-educated intelligentsia, Ramakrishna represented the broad stream of Hinduism. He was at home with the traditional doctrines and attitudes of the Hindu tradition.

Ramakrishna was not a scholar or a philosopher. He believed that complicated questions of doctrine and dogma were irrelevant to religious experience. He viewed everything from a spiritual plane of simplicity. The essential aspect of Ramakrishna's life was its intense and passionate spirituality. The intensity of his desire led him to the goal of spiritual realization. He was once asked by one of his disciples:

"Sir, have you seen God?"

Ramakrishna replied, "Yes, I have seen him just as I see you, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized. One can see and talk as I am doing with you." (Gambhiranandaswami, *History of Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 20).

Ramakrishna's zeal for the realization of God took him beyond his orthodox background into other great religions. In deep spiritual devotion, he realized the God of both Christianity and Islam. Like Rammohan, he desired to have a knowledge of other religions. He lived as a Muslim while assimilating the ideas of Islam and as a Christian while assimilating those of Christianity. He experimented with all the paths accessible to him and found that all spiritual paths sought the same glorious goal:

> What men believe is of secondary importance; piety is all that matters. Every religion, whatever its doctrine, becomes the true religion when man dedicates himself in love to God and serves his

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> neighbour in love. So there is no sense in exchanging one religion for another. Union with God should be sought by Christians in Christianity, by the Mohammadans in Mohammadanism and by the Hindus in Hinduism.
>
> (See Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development*, p. 210)

Ramakrishna's religious experience validated the twofold nature of God: (i) God with form and (ii) God without form; Ramakrishna called the former personal God with whom a relationship could be established as with a human being. He could be viewed as one's father, mother, child, lover, etc; the only requirement is that one has to approach God with love. The personal deity is an active sustaining deity. Ramakrishna viewed this active God as *Śakti* or the Divine Mother of the Universe.

Ramakrishna called the Impersonal Deity Brahman. It is 'without attributes, without motion, immovable, unshakeable'. It is the Absolute. One cannot comprehend it but only merge into it. Ramakrishna used the image of the salt-doll dipped into the ocean to explain the nature of Brahman. The doll has solid form before it is put into water, yet it soon dissolves and merges into the vastness of the sea. The realization of the Absolute puts one into the *nirvikalpaka* state.

With the realization of the personal and impersonal aspects of the Divine Being there appears to be a problem of chosing between the two. But to Ramakrishna they were one and the same being. They might be perceived as different, but in truth they are inseparable. The Lord manifests Himself either as Brahman or *Śakti* according to the needs of the aspirants. However, Ramakrishna made it clear that an individual vision of God should never be regarded as the only form of God which can appear to man. Even in one's own life, at one stage the personal God may be more satisfactory and the impersonal one at another stage. Ramakrishna asks us to remember that both are one and the same and that we should never be completely satisfied with a single aspect.

What is the discipline that one should follow in order to experience God. According to Ramakrishna, an attitude of total desire for God is one of the first qualities necessary. He held that he who yearns for Him shall find Him. God cannot remain hidden from an earnest seeker.

The second requirement was faith in God. Lack of faith, Ramakrishna thought, caused suffering to mankind. The quality of innocence, the child-like faith was necessary in all spiritual quest. Beyond desire and faith, Ramakrishna also taught renunciation of worldlines.

> When you recognize the world to be unreal and ephemeral, you will no longer have any love for it. You will renounce it from the the mind, and become free from all desires. When you succeed in this act of renunciation, you come to know God who is the Cause of the Universe.

To achieve detachment, he taught intellectual discrimination. He also emphasized sexual continence or *brahmacarya.* He maintained that the loss of ego was also necessary for the vision of God. Egotism was like a cloud that blocked a clear perception of the radiance of God. He maintained that the ego was the basis of all worldliness. The complete loss of ego characterized the *nirvikalpa* state. The person who cannot lose ego totally cannot realize the Absolute.

Ramakrishna's sayings and parables show a great amount of knowledge and wisdom. His explanations of the form and nature of God are inspiring. His methods of realizing God are traditional ; he emphasizes innocence, chastity, faith, renunciation, etc. in seeking God.

Ramakrishna's teaching is marked by its all-compassing universality; he staunchly defended Hinduism in all its form and yet he never once condemned other religions.

The eminence of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) as Ramakrishna's chief disciple is certainly undisputed. By creating the Ramakrishna Mission, he preserved and extended the influence of his Master. To his monks, he proposed the duty of social service—the service of the sick and the poor. Vivekananda stood intensely for the necessity of upholding and continuing the Hindu religion; as such, his beliefs are the direct reflections of Ramakrishna.

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He managed to incorporate into one stream of knowledge the rationalistic approach of Rammohan Roy, the intensely nationalistic approach to religion adopted by Dayanand and the passionate spiritualism that was so characteristic of Ramakrishna.

In Vivekananda, Ramakrishna saw the man who was capable, both intellectually and spiritually, of spreading his message. Consequently Vivekananda's life after Ramakrishna's death was spent in arduous travelling, which included trips to world religious congresses such as the one held at the Chicago's World Fair in 1892 where he eloquently conveyed the salient features of Hinduism. He preached to the Hindus the abandonment of superstition, untouchability, caste pride, etc., as well as the practice of love and service of followmen.

Vivekananda saw the need of adopting Western technology and education. He advocated that scientific thought and research must penetrate India ; but he maintained that they should be combined with the fundamental spiritual attitude of the Indian religions.

## SARVODAYA MOVEMENT

Mahatma Gandhi adopted the word 'Sarvodaya' to describe his religio-social ideal after reading John Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*, in 1904. The basic precepts of the book, in Gandhi's estimation, were three :

(*i*) The good of the individual is contained in the good of all ;
(*ii*) a lawyer's work has the same value as a barber's as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work, and
(*iii*) the life of labour, *i.e.* the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

Gandhi envisaged a society in which all considerations of high and low were wiped out, and equality among all, was firmly established. Gandhi hoped for a society where inequalities of wealth were eliminated. The essence of *sarvodaya* is the prosperity of all. This does not, however, mean that it is materialistic in character. *Sarvodaya* symbolizes Gandhi's whole social philosophy, making provision for both material prosperity and spiritual welfare. According to Gandhi, the *Sarvodaya* movement could be effective only when the participants purified themselves. He insisted, therefore, on certain ethical disciplines. The first discipline was truth which was equated by Gandhi with

God. With a pure heart, one could strike through the relative truths and catch a glimpse of the Absolute Truth. The very sincerity of a searcher armed with pure motives would set him on the right path. This concern for Truth led him to the study of other religions. He believed that the discovery of merits in other religions would contribute to the enrichment of religious life and to the revival of the neglected aspects of one's own religious thought and practice. He gave Hinduism a new dimension of the spirit by continually relating it to progressive discovery of Truth.

The next discipline advocated by Gandhi was non-violence which he considered a quality of the spirit ; it was intertwined with Truth. To him non-violence was the means and Truth the end. If the means were kept pure, then the desired result (Truth) would necessarily follow. In his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* Gandhi interprets the Mahābhārata war on non-violent lines. Although the *Gītā* was apparently written to encourage Arjuna to wage war, the war which it really advocated, according to Gandhi, was a war in the spiritual realm. It encouraged war of holiness within oneself. This interpretation of the *Gitā* surprised a good many Hindus. But Gandhi firmly maintained that the *Gītā* taught non-violence.

Gandhi corrected two errors which were consciously or unconsciously held by the masses of India. First, the dangerous misunderstanding of the law of *karma*, that is, everyone has to suffer the consequences of his deeds and there is no need to change things. This belief had led to an unhealthy tolerance of the many economic and social evils, taking away the initiative of the individual and dynamism of the society. The other error he saw was that meditation was considered higher than work which made it possible for the able-bodied to eat without work. Both these errors had reduced the masses of India to poverty and helplessness. Gandhi taught the dignity of work by his own example. Gandhi made the 'bread labour' part of his religion and injected dynamism and creativity into his non-violent movement. "God is continuously active", said Gandhi, "if we would serve Him, our activity must be as unwearied as His." Work changes society ; idleness degenerates it. One must, therefore, work and work in a spirit of service.

Gandhi knew only too well the corruption and degradation that had crept into the Hindu tradition in practice. He knew the elements in it that had become obsolete and had lost their value in the context of new times. The Hinduism that was dear to Gandhi was purified Hinduism, purified and sanctified in the crucible of his life and experience. "What we see today", he said, "is not pure Hinduism, but often a parody of it." He was, however, aware of the basic vitality of Hinduism which had successfully survived the vicissitudes of history for over three thousand years. He saw in it elements of the highest quality which had kept it alive.

In his conception of Hinduism, Gandhi had no place for untouchability. He denounced untouchability as a travesty of religion and a blot on Hinduism. "I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always disregarded it as an excrescence." he wrote. Within a lifetime, Gandhi, by his teachings, personal example and reforming zeal transformed the untouchables into a fearless, progressive and vital part of the Indian nation :

> Untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity and love...And I should be content to be torn into pieces rather than to disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor will they get it, if they allow this noble religion to be disregarded by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hinduism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying a fifth of our race the right of association on equal footing.

In the history of Hinduism, at no other time was there a man who staked his all for the upliftment of the depressed and the suppressed castes of India. And in so far as this reformation was in relation to the so-called lowest stratum in the Hindu community, its effect touched every stratum of Hindu society, thus setting into motion one of the most powerful liberalizing forces in human religious history.

Gandhi saw Hinduism as a 'living organism liable to growth and decay'. He was aware of its points of strength and weakness. He was foremost to recognize the injustice of the caste-system as he found in India of his day. He offered relentless battle against it. His very insistence on Truth led him to focus its revealing light on the cruelties of the prevalent caste system. The caste system was, he believed, opposed to the basic concept of love. Therefore he sought to break loose from the shackles of the past and declared that unless Hinduism washed away the dirt of the distinction between the high and the low, it could not survive.

With all his zeal for reform Gandhi remained convinced of the basic truths of his own tradition. When an American correspondent asked Gandhi the reason for his loyalty to Hinduism, he answered : "Believing as I do in the influence of heredity, being born in a Hindu family I have remained a Hindu. I should reject it, if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth. On examination I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to me inasmuch as it gives to the votary the largest scope for self-expression. Not being an exclusive religion, it enables followers of that faith not merely to respect other religions but to admire and assimilate, whatever may be good in them."

Gandhi called himself a *sanātani Hindu* (orthodox) on his own terms. The so-called orthodox Hindus disputed his claims, but obviously, his *sanātani* Hinduism was difierent from the conventional one ; else, he could not have been the revolutionary champion of the depressed and the oppressed classes of India. Still less could he have developed his spiritual affinities with the Buddha, the Christ and Muhammad. "I call myself a *sanātani* Hindu," he wrote, "because (i) I believe in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Purāṇas* and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures ; (ii) I believe in the *Varnāsarmadharma*, in a sense in my opinion, strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense ; (iii) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular, and (iv) I do not disbelieve in idol-worship."

The freedom of choice and action available to a Hindu at every stage appealed to Gandhi. The idea of spiritual unity and fundamental oneness of all things in Hinduism fascinated him. In it he saw an outlook and a way of life where the individual was enabled to exist in tune with the Infinite. It gave him the philosophical root of tolerance. Following the Hindu view, Gandhi held that all the great religions which had helped the spiritual development of humanity were true and necessary. However, Gandhi believed that the satisfaction of a particular people was to be found chiefly in its own tradition ; for it provided the cultural rootage to the individuals as well as the direction and meaning to their lives.

The ideas and ideals of *sarvodaya* espoused by Gandhi are being practised presently by Vinoba Bhave, Jaya Prakash Narayan and other followers of the Mahatma after his death. They believe that *sarvodaya* is the only effective alternative to violent change advocated by certain secular ideologies.

As one analyses the modern Hindu movements, one realizes that they emerged at a time when a reorientation of Hinduism was urgently needed. The challenges of Western science, technology and religion had almost undermined the confidence of the Hindus in their own religion. Since Hinduism had no central religious authority to face these challenges, the responses were variegated. A process of search for the basic values in the Hindu religious tradition was started. These movements reconditioned Hinduism as it were ; but they did not impair its basic structure. Besides, due to the pioneering work of stalwarts such as Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Radhakrishnan and many other Orientalists, Hinduism regained its balance and confidence ; it is now making its influence felt in the Western Hemisphere as well. Dr C.E.M. Joad aptly describes this phenomenon as 'the Counter attack from the East.'

What is the present condition of these 'reform movements' ? Though many of them continue to operate, the vigour and vitality which they had exhibited in those pioneering days appear to have diminished after the emergency was successfully met. It looks that they have been absorbed into the general stream and, thus, become indistinct in the reformed and reformulated Hinduism. In the face of the lack of a centralized organization, this achievement looks amazing and almost miraculous. However, basically it points to the inherent dynamism of this ancient religious tradition and its capacity for adoption and adjustment.

## VI

# HINDUISM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Dr V.A. Devasenapathi

A recent writer on Hinduism says, 'Of Hinduism, for example, it has been often and truly said that nothing can be asserted about it that cannot also be denied.'[1] One wonders whether the reverse is not equally true, *viz.* that nothing can be denied of it that cannot also be affirmed! Hinduism is such a rich and variegated mass of beliefs and practices that without violent distortions one can find the nucleus of the basic ideas of other religions therein. No doubt, these ideas are not to be found exactly as they are in their respective religions. But the possibility of a fruitful link-up exists in the basic scriptures. This possibility aids the assimilative genius of the Hindu mind to welcome the basic ideas of other faiths and appropriate them in its own way. Its vitality is due not a little to its genius for assimilation.

Hinduism is considered to be the oldest of the world's living religions. Its long history covers about forty centuries from 2000 B.C. to modern times. At the commencement of this period, there might have been a fusion of Aryan and pre-Aryan cultures, though we are not able to determine the exact nature and date of the culture that obtained at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. If the claim of the Syrian church to be the oldest Christian community is accepted, Hinduism might be said to have had at least a nodding acquaintance with Christianity from the very first century of its era. The Muslims came to India first, as occasional traders and later as invaders. The Muslim rule covers about five and a half centuries (from A.D. 1200). In one way or another, the Muslim contact might be said to date from the eighth century of the Christian era. The effective British rule could be assigned to the period from A.D. 1800 to A.D. 1947.[2]

India has had on its soil for centuries Christians, Jews, Parsis, and Muslims. From about the fifth century B.C. it has had Buddhists and Jains. Thus the major religions have co-existed in India for several centuries.

What is the attitude of Hinduism to other religions? The *Ṛg-Veda* declares : 'Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.'[3] This attitude is due to its realization of a profound truth which it proclaims in these memorable and oft-quoted words : 'Reality is one; sages speak of it in different ways'. Hinduism believes that there are as many facets of Reality as there are individuals to perceive it. Hence we find an astonishing variety in Hinduism. Indeed, atheism and agnosticism are not unknown to the *Vedas* judging from the allusions therein to 'free-thinking'.[4] We find in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* a spirit of accommodation : "Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them, for, on all sides, whatever path they may choose is mine."[5]

It may be thought that by the time Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism gained ascendency, a sectarian attitude would have superseded the earlier one of catholicity and accommodation. No doubt, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva* respectively came to be considered the Supreme Spirit in these forms of Hinduism. But this did not lead to an outright rejection of other gods. There were also clashes between these as well as clashes with Buddhism and Jainism. These were unfortunate phases which soon passed away. The method of stating the *pūrvapakṣa* and then the *siddhānta*, followed in Indian philosophy, provides for a fair consideration of the other-man's point of view in coming to a conclusion. In this way, the valuable elements in the views of others are retained. Likewise, in religion also the worship of other gods is not condemned outright. Instead, such worship is also considered to lead to the Supreme Being in the end. The Śaivite worships the Supreme as *Śiva*. In singing the praises of His Holy Feet, Saint Appar says, "They illumine the understanding and comfort the followers of the six faiths."[6] What these six faiths are may vary from time to time. In the seventh century of the Christian era, when Saint Appar lived, it might have meant only indigenous faiths. But surely, consistent with its spirit of accommodation, Hinduism can include in its list faiths which, originating elsewhere, have found a congenial soil in India.

Nammālvār, a great Vaiṣṇavite mystic of the South India sings: "The followers of the different faiths attain to the feet of the gods they worship, according to their lights. The gods they worship are not deficient. The Supreme Lord pervading everyone has ordained that everyone should follow his destined course."[7]

Nammālvār wishes to encourage sincere worship which, irrespective of the chosen god to whom it is directed, will still be acceptable to the Supreme Being. According to him, wherever there is sincere worship,[8] there is the temple of the Supreme Lord. In fact, he does not wish to keep out even atheists. Even their denial of God really implies His existence! He says:

> When we affirm His existence, He exists, and all objects are His forms! When we deny His existence, He still exists as formless, in formless objects! Objects with form and objects without form become respectively, His gross and subtle bodies. As His existence is, thus, affirmed and denied, He exists with both these characteristics. He pervades everything everywhere and at all times.[9]

Nammālvār sees that the different faiths are ordained by the Lord. He says:

> The Lord has created diverse ways of worship. He has created faiths that differ among themselves, according to the differences in the understanding of their followers. He has created the various gods of these faiths. He has filled the gods with His form. "Oh, Thou with none to be compared with Thee. I shall cultivate devotion to Thee.[10]

When religions and scriptures conflict with one another, what is to be done? Arulnandi Śivācārya, a Śaivite preceptor of the thirteenth century of the Christian era observes:

> Religions and religious texts are many; they conflict and are at variance with one another. If the question is which is *the* religion and which is *the* text among these, the answer is that is *the* religion and that *the* text which, without rancour and without rejecting one of them and accepting another, find a place for all of them in a spirit of fairness.[11]

The method suggested here calls not only for mere inclusiveness but also for harmony. The different religions and texts are brought together in such a way that each one of them finds a place in the totality according to its capacity to meet the requirements of the aspirant. The arrangement involved here will necessarily call for evaluation and gradation. But this is no adverse reflection on those lower in the scale. After all, one has to rate as higher what one considers to be more inclusive and more harmonious than another which is not so. This 'staircase' (*sopana*) arrangement is for psychological purposes. The recognition that all approaches may be equally valid need not prevent one from adopting one of them for one's own use. As a matter of fact, one has to make a choice. The 'staircase' approach is useful in making a choice. But this should not result in a denial of value to other approaches. Of course, great care must be taken to avoid an attitude of condescension and superciliousness to the followers of other faiths. Though as a Śaiva Siddhāntin, Arulnandi Śivācārya rates *Saiva Siddhānta* as the highest, he emphasizes the need for humility.[12]

It may be said that, in general, Hinduism adopts such an attitude ; whereas it concedes validity to all approaches, it encourages one of them for actual pursuit. A saint of the seventeenth century, Tāyumānavar, sang of the harmony of *Vedānta* and *Siddhānta*—'*Vedānta siddhānta samarasa*'. It the last century, we had two remarkable saints, Rāmākrishna Paramahamsa in northern India and Rāmalinga Swāmi in the South. It is not possible to determine from outside the exact and, possibly varied nature of a saint's religious experience. Conceivably, he might ascend the spiritual Everest from various sides. To the external observer, his ascent may appear to be only from the side of his own religion. In the case of Rāmakrishna, we are fortunate in having his own testimony that he tried not only the different Hindu approaches but also the Christian and Muslim ones ; he found them all leading to the same goal. Rāmakrishna's pronouncement on this matter is well known. Yet in view of its value for the subject under discussion, we invite attention to his oft-quoted words :

> 'I have practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects . . . . . I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs, and traverse all the different ways once . . . . Wherever I look I see men quarrelling in the name of religion . . . . . The tank has several

> ghāts. At one, Hindus draw water in pitchers, and call it *jal*; at another, Musalmans draw water in leathern bottles, and call it *pāni*: at a third, Christians, and call it water. Can we imagine that the water is not *jal*, but only *pāni* or water? How ridiculous! The substance is one under different names and everyone is seeking the same substance; nothing but climate, temperament and name varies. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him. He will surely realize Him.

Ramakrishna's life and teachings are an authoritative confirmation of the Hindu view that all approaches are equally valid.

Changing the figure of 'the staircase' used earlier, we may use the figure of the radii. The radii are equidistant from the centre and their points terminate on the circumference. But they get close as they approach the centre where they finally meet. Even so on account of historical, cultural and other factors, religions differ from one another, particularly in the matter of theoretical formulation. But when the religious experiences are compared, there is a remarkable closeness. It is a worth while exercise to collect the utterances of the mystics which contain only the general name of the Supreme Being worshipped by them, not particular names distinctive of their respective faiths. In the absence of any indication about authorship, we may not know whether a given utterance is that of a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian. Rāmakrishna's testimony is of great value to all students of Comparative Religion and, to Hindus who cherish their heritage of religious open-mindedness.

Rāmalinga Swami (A.D. 1823-74) spoke and sang about *Samrasa Sanmārga Sangham*—the harmonious federation of all faiths. He envisaged the happy consummation of men of good faith coming together. In the present century, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharishi provided inspiration and guidance not only to the Hindus but to men of other faiths in deepening their religious experience. It may not be unreasonable to conclude that unless their own experience had embraced the treasures of other religions, their guidance would not have had any value for followers of other faiths. We may state the same point differently by saying that their own experience was so authentic that it enabled them to understand the heart of anyone else's faith. Approaching this from another angle, Professor Wilfred Cantwell

Smith says, "I predict that a time will come, perhaps fairly soon, when men will see rather that if the Christian revelation is valid, then it follows from this very fact that other men's faith is genuine, is the form through which God encounters those other men and saves them."[13] Indeed, we see these days efforts not only to promote the meeting of Christians of all denominations, including Roman Catholics, but also to promote 'dialogues' between the followers of all faiths. Christian intellectuals have found it necessary to discuss the implications of non-Christians who have learnt about Christ and His message but do not accept Him so far as formal conversion or baptism is concerned.

Father Bede Griffith, for instance, discusses this question at some length in a chapter entitled 'The Salvation of the Unbeliever', in his *Christian Ashram—Essays towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue.* Here are the basic points :

> We thus reach the rather paradoxical conclusion, though it is theologically certain, that it is not by his outward profession of faith whether he is Christian or Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or agnostic or atheist, that man is saved, but by his response to the call of grace, which comes to everyman secretly in every religious or irreligious state. Of course, it remains true, as we believe, that greater opportunities of grace are given in the Christian religion, and in the Catholic Church, but on the one hand no one is excluded from this covenant of grace, and on the other hand we know that 'to whom much has been given, of them much will be required'.

Perhaps this may provide an explanation of the rather mysterious saying of the gospel : 'If anyone shall deny the son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but if anyone shall deny the Holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven him either in this world or in the next'. Father Griffith explains the matter thus :

> To sin against the Holy spirit is to reject the voice of God in the conscience ; it is to sin against the light which is given to every man, by which alone he can come to know God and if a man sins against this light, there is nothing which can save him.

With exemplary Christian charity he concludes the discussion thus :

> We know that when God assumed a human nature, he assumed the nature of all men and died for all men without exception. There is, therefore, no one from first man to the last man who is excluded from the grace of Christ. Though the manner in which this grace is extended

> may be obscure to us, yet we cannot doubt its reality. It is helpful perhaps to consider that in God's sight, all men are in a sense one man. There is a 'mystical body' of humanity, which fell in Adam and was redeemed in Christ. It is as members of this body that men are saved whatever may be the means by which grace reaches them and provided that they not deliberately reject the grace.[11]

From the Protestant side we find a similar view expressed by C.S. Lewis with his customary clarity :

> 'Isn't it frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him ? Well, the truth is God hasn't told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself. Christians are Christ' body, the organism through which he works. Every addition to that body enables Him to do more. If you want to help those outside you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ who *can* help them. Cutting off a man's fingers would be an odd way of getting him to do more work.[15]

These scholars recognize that it is not a case of wilful blindness. Perhaps they see the possibility of Christ being more inclusive than Christianity. This need not, and should not mean their becoming less Christian. Paradoxically, it may be that, as Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith envisages, the more Christian they are the more sensitive they become to God's grace operating in non-Christian religions. 'And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd' said Jesus Christ.[16] Would it be fanciful to think that the statement 'there shall be one flock, one shepherd' is in spirit and intention of what Tirumūlar, a Tamil mystic also says in these words: 'There is but one community (*i.e.* humanity), there is but one God.'[17] In the final analysis, God is the one Shepherd and and all souls constitute His flock.

Mahatma Gandhi typified the Hindu attitude to other religions by including in his prayer meetings readings from the Bible and the Qur'ān in addition to those from the Hindu scriptures. He freely admitted the great benefit he derived from other religions. It was because he was so firmly rooted in Hinduism that he considered it his sacred duty to promote religious harmony. Mahatma Gandhi's practice of including prayers from the scriptures of other religions is in conformity with liberal interpretation *anantā vai vedāḥ*—the Vedas are many, and without end.[18] Such a liberal interpretation calls for inclusion of not only sacred works of Hinduism in the various languages of India but also of the scriptures of other religions under the title, Scriptures. We see that from the distant past up to the present, Hinduism has welcomed noble ideas from everyside.

We may now consider the relation between Hinduism and other religions in the context of (a) features distinctive of Hinduism which may appear to be totally unacceptable to other religions, and (b) features of other religions, in accommodating or assimilating which Hinduism may experience difficulties. If the encounter of Hinduism with other religions is to be fruitful, attention has to be paid to these two aspects.

(a) Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism agree in their acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, reincarnation, the transmigration of souls, and *karma-saṃsāra*. When important religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not accept these doctrines and when no conclusive empirical proof for these doctrines is available, how can Hinduism take rebirth, etc. for granted? Not only the Church but Jesus Christ also, it may be argued, rejected this doctrine.[19] However, it may be noted, incidentally that the idea of previous birth must have had some currency in Palestine at the time of this incident. When Jesus asked his disciples, 'Whom do men say that I am?' they answered, 'John the Baptist, but some say, Elias; and others, one of the prophets'. When asked what they themselves said, Peter, no doubt, replied; 'Thou art the Christ.'[20] For a Hindu, this verse indicates that the idea of reincarnation of some sort was familar to the contemporaries of Jesus.

Belief in rebirth was not unknown to the ancient world. Plato mentions it in the last book of the Republic.

Navaratnam, in his *Studies in Hinduism* quotes the words of Dr W.R. Inge : "Has an ex-dignitary of the Anglican church any business to dabble in these heathen beliefs? Well they are not so alien as we think. Rebirth is plainly asserted in the wisdom of Solomon (vii, 19, 20) which the Roman church rightly accepts as canonical. I believe there is an element of truth in this belief about our personality which is common to India and all the mystics."[21]

Navaratnam quotes Dr Alexander Cannon, a British psychiatrist and neurologist: "For years the theory of incarnation was a nightmare to me and I did my best to disprove it and even argued with my trance-subjects to the effect that they were talking nonsense, and yet as the years went by, one subject after another told me the same story in spite of different and various conscious beliefs—in eflect until now, well over a thousand cases have been so investigated and I have to admit that there is such a thing as reincarnation. It is therefore only right and proper that I should include this study as a branch of psychology, as my text bears witness to the great benefit many have received psychologically from discovering hidden complexes and fears which undoubtedly have been brought over by the astral body from past lives."[22]

Geoffrey Parrinder notes that the notion of rebirth may appear speculative to the Westerner and some attempts are made in these days to prove rebirth by claiming to have memories of previous lives. He says: "But in fact the classical Hindu scriptures say nothing of such memories. For them the sole evidence required is the indestructibility of the soul and its procession through the veils of successive earthly embodiments. A parallel might be drawn between this conviction and some modern scientific ideas. The chromosomes of the cell pass through successive generations, though this can hardly mean a reincarnation of the same person. The soul, or the consciousness, is a different thing. Yet, if chemical elements are indestructible, perhaps mental elements are too. The body may be transmuted but not utterly annihilated. Then the mind or soul should also be able to survive, though transfigured. It is perheps along such lines that a new theory of reincarnation needs to be worked out. Transmigration and *karma* have been pointing the way to a concept of survival, but they need reshaping by modern thought."[23] The last sentence here, we may venture to say, is a constructive suggestion resulting from open-mindedness to the question.

Likewise, the Hindu welcomes a suggestion or even a hint of this idea from Islam as in the following oft-quoted lines of Jalaluddin Rūme :

> I died as a mineral and became a plant,
> I died as a plant and rose to an animal.
> I died as an animal and I was a man.
> Why should I fear ? When was I less by dying.

It would take us too far from our present purpose to discuss the differences behind the apparent similarities. But all that is suggested here is that this fundamental belief of the Hindu is present in some peripheral form in Christianity and Islam also. The Hindu contents himself with the thought that there is no need in the spiritual context of the religions for an explicit acceptance of this belief.

For Hinduism, rebirth is necessarily linked up with *karma*. The doctrine of *karma* is definitely not fatalism or pre-destination. If an individual is not free to act, there will be no point in moral judgements at all. How *karma* started, we do not know. What is important is that we know how to tackle it. It may be recalled that *karma* has three aspects—*sañcita*, *prārabdha* and *āgāmi*. It is the *prārabdha* part that constitutes the major obstacle. Like an arrow in flight, normally, it has to complete its course. But even here like a gust of wind that may deflect it from its course or arrest its flight, God's grace may operate against it Or like a cool-headed person dodging a blow or side-stepping to escape a frontal assault, a firm believer in God may escape the major part, if not the whole of the effect of *prārabdha*. This, again, is a question calling for more detailed discussion. As for *sañcita* and *āgāmi*, the religious texts do speak of their innocuousness once we reach a certain stage of ethical and spiritual maturity.

From the standpoint of actual practice, what guidance does the doctrine of *karma* provide ? Our thoughts, words and deeds must be good and beneficial to others. They should never be harmful to others. Why should we be good and not be bad ? It is certaintly not for getting rewards here or hereafter. It is our duty to do good and refrain from evil, no matter what the consequences are. *Karma* binds one so long as one does action with a sense of agency, concerned about rewards and punishments. When we grow beyond this stage, as we must, *karma* does not cease, but its *power to bind* ceases. Instead, it helps in our onward march.

There is no justification for talking of *prārabdha* when called upon to act. Action that will promote benefit must be performed to the very end. It is only when nothing more can be done and when our efforts have failed to bring about the desired result that we can attribute the failure to *prārabdha*. An ethical work in Tamil says, 'It is not useless to administer medicine to a patient whose life appears to be ebbing away; for sometimes success results even where failure seemed imminent.'[24] The *Tirukkural* says, 'Even where destiny has willed it otherwise, effort is its own reward';[25] Hinduism has a rich ethical literature in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. It would be very odd, indeed, to account for this literature if the writers had considered, *karma* especially in its aspect as *prārabdha*, as the *first* and the *only word* on the subject. Whereas one may reconcile oneself to failure after sincere and sustained efforts by attributing it to *prārabdha*, one should never tell a person in distress that he has brought it upon himself by his past misdeeds and that he is experiencing his *prārabdha* now. No one has a right to withhold help to a person in distress. Not to rush to the help of another when one could do so is to incur bad *karma* for oneself. Indeed, it is more serious ; it is an indication that one is out of touch with God. A great Vaiṣṇavite teacher, Nanjīyar is said to have remarked as fellows : "One can find out for oneself whether one has the qualities of a Vaiṣṇavite thus : If on seeing a person in distress one has compassion for him, one is in touch with God; if, on the other hand, on seeing a person in distress one says that he deserves it, the conclusion is that one is out of touch with God."[26]

The belief in a cycle of births and deaths also presents serious difficulties for some religions. Hinduism believes in an apparently unending cycle of births and deaths ; and the Hindus long to escape from such a cycle. World-weariness and life-weariness seem to dominate Hindu thought. Will the Hindu belief in *saṃsāra*, as involving a repetitive cycle of births and deaths be acceptable to non-Hindus ?

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However unpleasant, they are considered by the Hindus to be inevitable so long as an individual has not grown to his full moral and spiritual stature. Except in a few cases—very few indeed—the rest of mankind can hardly be said to have lived in such a way as to attain the supreme goal of life within the limited span of a single life. Again, what happens to children who die in their infancy or to those who die prematurely ? Instead of being condemned, on the basis of the record of one life, each one is given a series of opportunities to progress towards the goal, in spite of back-slidings. Weariness is felt by sensitive persons when they realize either that they are not progressing towards the goal or not progressing fast enough. Somehow the tendency is to misuse the unique opportunity of being born as human beings by living a selfish and sensual life. This defeats the main purpose of birth as a human being, *i.e.* to advance in spirituality. Hence the weariness. But, if an individual actuated by a keen sense of the presence of God lives a life of service to all beings, human life is to be welcomed. Indeed, Tāyumānavar says that given this possibility he is prepared to take not one birth, but births endlessly ! Hinduism envisages salvation for all beings. Hence there is no question of the transmigratory cycle being eternal. There are ways out of it.

The Hindu conception of the four *yugas* is also likely to be a source of difficulty. Are these *yugas* cyclic ? Do they repeat themselves without any purpose ? The Hindu view is that they are spiral, leading us up towards our goal. Besides, we have a refreshing attitude to the *yugas* in Nammālvār who says there can be no *kaliyuga* (the age of deterioration or decadence) where all join together in worship. In explaining this line, one of the commentators says that the age of decadence is when God is forgotten and the age of perfection is when there is a ceaseless awareness of Him.

The Hindu time-span may appear to be fantastic and Hinduism may seem to lack all sense of history. But the position is that all history is spiritual for the Hindu. Not indeed the history of kings and kingdoms that constitutes history but the story of the spiritual pilgrimage of the soul. The soul is not a creature of time but a child of eternity. So, where time has to be related to eternity, it has to rise in stature. Hence the fantastic figures. Again, are the *Purāṇas* and *itihāsas* to be taken as history? All of them may be interpreted as allegories. This would certainly help us to get over many 'crudities'. But, are we sure that we have a right to empty them of all historical content? They may have a hard core of history with an enormous encrustation. It would be a great loss to discard the former because of the latter.

Like the doctrine of *karma*, the Hindu mysticism also is a source of difficulty for others. First of all, it may be treated as a case of non-dualism (or absolutism). Even as theistic mysticism, it may be considered objectionable as abolishing all difference between the creator and the creature (or creatures). It may be noted that even in the case of non-dualism, the distinction betwean God and the soul is maintained up to the stage of realization. Its contention is that it would not be the plentitude of final experience if subject-object distinction still lingers. As for theistic mysticism, it certainly recognizes that however intimate the union between the soul and God, the soul does not cease to be but continues to exist. The soul ceases only to be aware of itself because, at union, its awareness is totally of God. It has no place for awareness of anything else—not even of itself.

As for pantheism or nature mysticism, the mystics, while aware of God's presence in nature, realize that He is more than nature. Compare the following utterance of Tirumaṅgai Ālvār, a Vaiṣṇavite mystic.

> If you, my Lord, are (in) fire, water, the cardinal directions, and the big earth, we, your devotees, fail to see your presence. Are you not to us our mother, father, and father's father?

We may take it that the theistic Hindu mystic longs for an 'I-Thou' relationship. We are made to realize that for us God is *at least* personal, not *utmost* personal. The Hindu mystics sometimes identify the Lord with various elements of nature and sometimes deny that He is any of them, and sometimes run the affirmations and negations together—all these in their efforts to convey some idea of the infinite and inexhaustible richness of God. It would be improper, then, to interpret statements without reference to the spirit and the context in which they are made.

The Hindu mysticism is alleged to suffer from another defect. It is considered to be escapism at worst or concern for one's own salvation at best. Here again, it is the duty of the Hindu to invite attention to certain facts. At least some mystics, whatever their philosophical background, have taken care to pass their message on to posterity through a succession of disciples and through the creation of sacred orders. Their sole aim in doing so is to give the benefit of their experience and findings to others.

Obviously, there have been many Hindu mystics who have left no institutions or succession of disciples or writings. May we then say that they were escapists or persons of 'enlightened' selfishness? No doubt, it is difficult to estimate a person's influence without any direct evidence such as his writing, etc. But, should a person, especially a person of high spirituality necessarily leave anything in writing or found an institution or inaugurate a line of disciples in order to confer benefits on mankind? Can anyone presume to judge what happens in the mystic's communion with God? Can we deny that he may plead with God for His blessings to individuals and communities for their total welfare ? A Śaivite work like the *Tiruttoṇdar-purāṇam* popularly known as the *Periya Purāṇam* gives us enough instances of the high-souled saints curing diseases, and so on by invoking God's grace. Though saints never indulge in a vainglorious display of miraculous powers, on certain occasions, they do give help, of an extraordinary kind. Would we be wrong in arguing that if God's beneficent rule is not seen but felt by the spiritually sensitive, the influence of His saints also would be felt likewise? In any case, whether felt or not, the benevolent influence of the saints is always there even as God's is. Are the mystics who have been transformed by God's grace, in their turn, able to transform others through His grace ? Does the spiritual current flow from the mystics to others who are in an unredeemed state? Here is a revealing analogy:

The water of the river flows into the sea and becomes saline. When the sea-water flows back into the river, the river water that became saline does not become fresh water again on meeting the river water but is able to make it saline. Likewise those who are in a redeemed state, even when they suffer an interruption, for a short spell in their blissful experience, do not cease to be actuated by God's grace. What is more, they purify others by their very presence.[27] The Hindu texts speak of purification (*dīkṣā*) by touch, sight and thought. Grace directly from God or through His saints may operate in subtle ways. The inner transformation that a saint may effect in an individual is more important than any help given to him on the merely material plane. Even a perfect political, economic and social organization would be productive of precious little good if the individuals constituting it suffer from 'sickness within'.

Attention may be invited to some striking cases of the desire of saints to share their experiences with others. The words of Tirumūlar may be recalled here :

'May the world have the bliss that I have enjoyed.'

In the introductory portion of a commentary on Nammālvār's *Tiruvāimoli*, the commentator has the following discussion. "After recording his well-high ineffable experience of God in the first decad of verses, why does Nammālavār turn his attention to give advice to others? Is it because he has reached the limits of this experience? Or is it because he has developed detachment? It cannot be the first, beeause the object of his experience is limitless and his love for it is also limitless. Nor can it be the second because the object of his experience offers fresh delights day by day and all through ages. Then why does he turn away from his experience to advise the world? It is because the nature of divine experience is such that it *has* to be shared with others. It overflows in its profusion and cannot be contained. So Nammālvār looks around to see with whom he may share his experience. He finds that the people around him are as immersed in sensory pleasures as he is in divine experience. He is moved by compassion. Hence he starts advising them. Indeed, it is a mark of a Vaiṣṇavite to feel intense for those who have totally missed the meaning of life." We find this idea of deep concern for the spiritual welfare of others in Umāpati Śivācārya's

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*Tiruarutpayan* (The Fruit of Divine Grace). Describing the *Jīvanmuktas*, it says :

> 'Reflecting on the sorrows of the souls under the influence of deceit, they move about in a flood of compassion'.

We have a clear indication here of the *jivanmukats*' active concern for souls in bondage. Tāyumānavar invities the world to share the great joy with him in the following words:

> 'you have seen crows sharing food (by calling each other). The limitless flood of divine experience is there for us to enjoy, making itself available to us in full and single form. Oh, people of the world do come to enjoy it before our body falls away.'

We observe in this gracious invitation (a) a keen desire on the part of the saint to share his experience with the entire world, (b) a ring of authenticity of his experience, and (c) an indication that this great experience awaits those who in this very life are ready to respond to the call of grace.

Another source of difficulty in Hinduism for others is perhapes 'idolatry'. It is not surprising that this should be repusive to followers of Christianity and Islam. Even Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth century like the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj denounced 'idolatry'. Some Hindus of earlier centuries also have expressed themselves against it. Compare, for instance the following song of Śivavākiyar.

'Treating a (piece of) stone that is planted (somewhere) as God, adorning it with a few flowers and going round it, what are the *mantras* that you repeat by muttering a few words? Can this planted stone speak when the Lord is within you? Does the pot know the taste of what is cooked in it?'

Idolatry is the worship of idols. Idols are images of Deity used as objects of worship. But a stone or stick is worshipped not just as a stone or stick, but as embodying the living presence of God. Hinduism provides the necessary tranining for the mind that is incapable of of concentrating on the Infinite spirit without the aid of any external symbol. To start with, a mark (*liñga*) is provided and it is treated as a living presence or person and is accorded all the honours given to royalty. From this external object, the mind is gradually led to a awareness of the Supreme Being as its own indweller and as an invisible all-pervasive presence.

There is another aspect of the question. It is not as if the idol is only for the beginner in Hinduism. Some of the greatest saints have given expression to their raptures in their presence. Indian languages are rich in devotional songs. Can we not take it that these saints of no mean intellectual powers, as their songs testify, call attention to the fact that God who is all-pervasive is present in idols also? Thus alike to persons of simple faith and to persons who have awakened to the presence of God, idols have their value. It is the supreme merit of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in fairly recent times, to have shown the value of idol worship—especially when we remember that even after he attained to the highest state of spirituality he continued to have his raptures in the presence of his beloved deity *Kāli.*

Worship in temples celebrated in songs by the seer-saints has a value all its own. Perhaps temple worship in Hinduism will appear to better advantage to the followers of other religions if Hindus pay a lot more attention than they do now to cleanliness inside and outside the temples and to a better sense of discipline in their conduct during worship. Saint Appar of the seventh century set an example by pursuing the *caryā* path, *i.e.* doing service by cleaning the temple precincts, gathering flowers, etc. He not only invested these initial acts in external worship with spiritual significance but also performed them as service to the devotees coming for worship.

There is yet another aspect. To attempt to feel the presence of God even in a stone is really a leap of the human spirit towards God. Idolatry of a reprehensible type occurs only when we 'worship' worldly objects for themselves and as objects of our beloved possession. The first chapter of Joy Davidman's *Smoke on the Mountain* warns us against dangers of this type.

Let us turn now to features of other religions, which Hinduism may find it difficult to accommodate or assimilate. It is good for the Hindu to realize that this is not an easy matter. Because Hinduism welcomes truths from all sides, he may take it for granted that he undestands all of them in their true significance. But this calls for genuine open-mindedness and sustained effort. We shall illustrate this briefly.

The concept of a suffering God, the doctrine of vicarious suffering, the passion and death of Jesus Christ–do these mean to the Hindu exactly what they mean to a Christian? Every Hindu has to answer for himself by making an earnest attempt understand Christian teaching and experience regarding these. There is a likelihood of taking atonement as at-one-ment without reference to the death and resurrection of Christ and missing the central teaching of Christianity. At-one-ment may also mean to a Christian something different from what it does to a Hindu. The idea of the crucifixion and death of Christ and his subsequent resurrection may appear unintelligible to non—Christians and especially to Hindus who take the souls—not only the Supreme but also the finite—to be without birth or death. However, only when we get an insight into this matter can we be said to come close to the heart of Christianity. It may be helpful to gather as many such references as we can in Hinduism to the idea of a suffering God.

When Vibhīṣana goes to Rāmā to surrender himself to him, Rāmā summons his lieutenants and asks them for their views. Except Hanuman, all others suspect a plot to entrap them. Finally, Rāmā gives his own views. He narrates six stories of self-sacrifice in support of his decision to accept Vibhīṣana's surrender. One story is that of Sibi Chakravarti, who gave his own flesh to the point of death to save a pigeon, which had sought him as a refuge from the attack of a falcon. The other story is that of the blue-throated Śiva. Rāmā says: 'Consider the case ofŚiva ; when the celestials rushed to Him in fear, He who considers Himself the refuge of all those who are in distress gathered the poison and drank it. If a man does not extend his hand in sympathy and help to the distressed, if he does not give what he has to the needy, if he has no love for those who go to him as their refuge, of what avail is such a man's virtue or even his manliness ?' The story of the blue-throated Śiva has appealed to the hearts of the devotees all through the ages. Sambandar, a Śaivite saint of the seventh century prays to Śiva for the remission of the *karma* of his followers, proclaiming his faith at the end of each verse of a decad that *karma* will not prevail against the followers of the blue-throated Śiva. The lovely blue-throat of Śiva is a perpetual reminder to His devotees that He would take all evil on Himself to save others.

This is the farthest experession of a suffering God that we find in Hinduism. Its complete expression is to be found in Christianity. Could it be said that a Hindu, who not overcomes all sense of 'I' and 'mine' but also virtually dies while still living to become a channel of God's grace, participtes in the Christian experience ? Dying for a Hindu is not merely merely physical but also spiritual ; to act contrary to God's will is spiritual death. To act in accordance with His will and become a channel of His grace is to escape spiritual death and to become spiritually alive.

A Hindu has difficulty in understanding the Christian claim (a) that in Jesus Christ there is a historical manifestation of God (whereas the Hindu *avatāras* and Bodhisattvas are said to be mythological), and (b) that this manifestation is complete and final. Not that the Hindu doubts the historicity of Jesus Christ; his difficulty would be about the nature of history—especially when it is spiritual history. Could we gauge God's manifestaions with our narrow measures of human history ? Is the historical time-scale adequate to measure eternity ? Again, with the profoundest gratitude for the blessing, not only Christians but all seekers of God have in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, a Hindu wonders whether God's revelation coud be limited to the one manifestation for all time. However, this a matter which the Hindu has to treat with profound reverence so that his own preconceptions may not make him insensitive to the Christian claim.

The Christian concepts of creation *ex nihilo* and of survival call for rethinking on the part of the Hindus. It is said that there is no real creation according to Hinduism, since (a) *Vivartavāda* does not consider creation to be ultimately meaningful, (b) *Brahmapariṇāmavāda*, subjects the Supreme Being Himself to modification and (c) the postulation of matter as coeval with the Supreme Being gives us only an artisan working on a given material, not a creator in the full sense of the term. In the light of these questions, the doctrine of creation needs further explanation. Likewise, in regard to survival, Zaehner says that while it is a marvellous achievement of the Indian to

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have discovered the timelessness, the worth, etc. of the soul, 'yet the increase and enrichment of this virgin soul through its habitation in a transient body is yet more wonderful, for through Christ who is the redeemer of mankind, the body itself is given an eternal dimension...'[28] There are references and hints of survival or divinization of the body in some Hindu systems that need to be examined in the light of the foregoing statement. Here again, an encounter between the Hindu and the Christian can be fruitful.

Turning to Islam, the Hindu is likely to feel that the pronounced opposition of Islam to idolatry leaves absolutely no common ground for meeting. However, without giving up his mode of worship, the Hindu could feel stimulated to direct this worship towards the Supreme Being and not allow it to become a child's play with toys or a meaningless and crude ritual. There is another salutary influence from Islam. The opening words of the Muslim prayer 'There is no god but God' can be of help to the Hindu in recalling the truth of the Hindu teaching that the Supreme spirit is One. Incidentally, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith has suggested, the first part of the prayer lends itself to another helpful interpretation. This provides not so much for the repudiation of other gods—but for an ascent and growth in one's own faith from a stage of formal acceptance through a stage of doubt and denial, to final recovery and stabilization of that faith, by God's grace. The stern monotheistic fervour of Islam may, thus, be taken to call for a vertical ascent in one's own faith, not a horizontal repudiation of other faiths. This interpretation may not have the official sanction of Islam, but it would help the Hindu to approach Islam and appropriate its teachings for his own benefit.

The Muslim congregational worship is a vivid portrayal of submission, individual and corporate, to the will of God. The whole gathering bends in worship as one man, with absolutely no trace of superiority of one over another, all alike being His creatures. It is for the Hindu to learn a lesson from this actual practice of equality.

In Judaism also, we have a strong monotheistic faith, with a lofty conception of God and a hoary tradition of God's special love for the Jews as a chosen people. It is healthy for Hinduism to meet the friendly challenge of strong monotheistic faiths like Judaism, Islam and Christianity, so that it may be reminded of its own allegiance to the one Supreme Spirit, despite the many manifestations which it accepts in its desire to provide for different spiritual needs and states of growth.

Coming to Indian religions, we find that Jainism and Buddhism have left their impress on Hinduism, with which they may be considered to have been in relation from the distant past. *Ahimsā* and *mahākaruṇa* to mention but one feature for each of these religions, might have had their source in Hinduism, but they have been so finely developed in their traditions as to enrich the whole of the Indian culture. Through their contribution to the various Indian languages, they have influenced considerably the thought and the language of Hinduism.

Sikhism, though a distinct entity, is close to Hinduism in so far as it accepts *karma* and release. It is unique in having collected the hymns of its gurus and having accorded to this collection—the *Granth Sahib*—the reverential status of the Guru. Guru Nanak (1469-1538), its founder, was against caste distinctions and idol-worship. The Sikhs have included verses from Rāmānanda, Jaideva and Namdev and many others. We see in Sikhism a robust religion with which Hinduism can have invigorating contacts.

The Parsis are the descendants of the ancient Zoroastrians. They are a small but well-educated group in India. According to Zoroastrians, good and evil forces fight for the possession of the human soul. Every man has to make a decision for himself. Thus there is a strong moral tone in Zoroastrianism. Under God to fight for good as against evil is a bracing conception which reminds the Hindu of his own *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The different world faiths are agreed that man, as he is, is not in a happy predicament. In respect of the answers to the questions why he is in this predicament, what should be done to get out of it and what his essential nature or his final destiny is. these faiths may differ. But words like sin, ignorance, grace, love, redemption, release, salvation, fellowship, community or brotherhood seem to be the common currency. No doubt,

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they are not used in an identical sense. But they arise in response to basic spiritual needs. Geoffrey Parrinder prefaces one of his books with the following appropriate quotations:[29]

> My brother kneels (so saith Kabir)
> To stone and brass in heathen-wise,
> But in my brother's voice I hear
> My own unanswered agonies.
> His God is as His Fates assign
> His prayer is all the world's—and mine.
>
> (Kipling)
>
> All God's names are hallowed.
>
> (M. Buber)

The different faiths are brought into intimate contact with one another in the present century. Their scriptures are available in reliable translations. Paul Tillich emphasizes the need for a dialogue with other faiths. Nicholas of Cusa of the fifteenth century of the Christian era described an imaginary meeting of the representatives of different faiths, perhaps, anticipating present trends. Parrinder speaks of the impact of Eastern religions on the West as a third reformation, the first being the one that took place in the sixteenth century and the second that following the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century. It will be a fulfilment of its own tradition and genius for Hinduism to see what it can learn from, and what it can contribute to, the free and friendly encounter of all faiths. The following prayer of Mānikkavācagar to God can very well be interpreted to include in its scope the devotees of all faiths.

> Grace dwells in You ; and within Grace You live.
> If both of You live within me, your servant,
> Ever give me the Grace to abide amidst Your devotees !

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